Patient Clinical Team

Stepping Out of Our Shells: How the Implementation of a Reciprocal Shadowing Program Between Laboratory and Emergency Department Can Improve Communication, Enhance Relationships, and Promote Patient Care

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Objectives: Effective communication between health care workers is vital to patient care and outcomes. Physicians, nurses, and laboratory professionals must work together in order to provide the best possible care to patients, especially for those who may require emergent laboratory services such as emergency release of blood products. Obstacles to achieving this goal include a lack of understanding of other staff members’ duties, responsibilities, and skills. Additionally, laboratories have historically been located in out of sight areas, and this abstraction has, at times, created disconnect between the laboratory and other health professionals; physical barriers yield mental barriers.

Methods: We developed a reciprocal shadowing program between blood bank laboratory professionals and emergency room nurses to improve communication and relationships between these two groups. Emergency room shadowing is a unique and informative approach for medical technologists to gain comprehensive insight into what a typical day is like for our emergency department team members. This also allows emergency room personnel a chance to visit the laboratory in order to achieve a greater understanding of “a day in the life of a medical technologist.” Implementation of the job shadowing program has resulted in improved communication, enhanced engagement, and encouraged positive performance for both blood bank laboratory professionals and emergency room nurses.

Conclusion: Emphasizing the importance of accurate, thorough, and reverent communication within our health care departments can dissolve barriers and stigmas that may have molded our present-day relationships. This innovative experience opens the door for future opportunities of job shadowing among interdisciplinary team members to improve communication and build a bridge of trust, resulting in improved quality patient service.

The Development and Implementation of a Novel Electronic Consult (E-Consult) System by a Laboratory Medicine Service: Experience From the First 2 Years of Use

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Introduction: A novel electronic consult (e-consult) system for the Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service (PLMS) at a high-complexity Veterans Administration Healthcare facility was implemented in 2015. The e-consult process involves resident review followed by attending review and co-signature. Before this, consults were made through direct provider communication without documentation in the medical record. We evaluated trends in utilization of the lab e-consult system by providers at our facility over the first 2 years since its inception.

Methods: E-consults completed by PLMS from 2015 to 2017 were reviewed to record the type of consult, date, requesting department, and patient location.

Results: E-consults totaled 351 over the study period. The volume varied by laboratory subsection: hematology (n = 215/351, 61.2%), clinical chemistry (109/351, 31.1%), blood bank (19/351, 5.4%), and microbiology (8/351, 2.3%). The hematology consults were for peripheral blood smear review (215/215, 100%), while the chemistry consults were for toxicology/drugs of abuse (81/109, 74%), test utilization (17/109, 16%), or nontoxicology (11/109, 10%). Nine services placed consults, with the majority from three services: primary care (279/351, 80%), hematology/oncology (39/351, 11%), and psychiatry (27/351, 8%). Most e-consults were requested on outpatients (309/351, 88%). Since e-consult implementation, the mean number of consults per month increased from 8.6 in 2015 to 18.1 in 2017, peaking in the last quarter of our analysis in 2017 with a mean of 25.3 consults per month.

Conclusion: Our novel e-consult system was popular among a broad scope of ordering providers and improved accessibility to, and documentation of, answers to complex laboratory questions. In addition, it raised the hospital-wide visibility of our section. Future goals include development of outcomes-based measures to more fully assess the clinical impact of this consult mechanism.