Improving Influenza Vaccination Rates and Understanding Reasons for Patient Refusal at Jefferson Hospital Ambulatory Practice

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Recommended Citation
Brandt, MD, Daniel; Butland, MD, Ashley; Kwak, MD, Kevin; Yoo, MD, Joseph; Lee, MD, Albert; and West, MD, Susan, "Improving Influenza Vaccination Rates and Understanding Reasons for Patient Refusal at Jefferson Hospital Ambulatory Practice" (2016). House Staff Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Posters. Poster 16.
http://jdc.jefferson.edu/patientsafetyposters/16

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BACKGROUND
- Despite CDC recommendations that everyone 6 months and older get flu vaccination, many eligible patients are not vaccinated.
- In 2014-2015 an estimated 106 million adults >18 years old were vaccinated, only 43.6% of the adult population.
- According to CDC and NHIS statistics in 2014 influenza and flu-related illness was in the top 10 leading causes of death in the US.
- Documented vaccination rates are rapidly becoming a quality metric for outpatient medical practices.

AIM
- Improve influenza vaccination rates for eligible patients at the Jefferson Hospital Ambulatory Practice to levels above the national average of 43.6% between October 2015 and March 2016 with universal screening and improved documentation.
- To characterize reasons for patients who did not receive vaccination.

METHODS
- Targets for intervention were identified as shown in Figure 1.
- Interventions
  - Universal Screening: All patients coming in for a routine visit between October 2015 and March 2016 were screened by Medical Assistants (MAs) with a pre-visit checklist regarding influenza vaccination status. Those who were unvaccinated were immediately offered vaccination.
  - Increasing Patient Awareness: Residents with Friday clinics discussed vaccination with patients who declined initially after discussion with MA’s.
  - Improving Patient Education: For those who declined, a “Misconceptions about Flu Vaccines” sheet was provided.
  - Improving Documentation: Vaccinations received during visit—as well as those received elsewhere—were documented within the practice’s EMR.
  - Understanding Refusals: Reviewed clinic notes and/or called patients to discuss reasons for deferring vaccination.

RESULTS

DISCUSSION
- The influenza vaccination rates for JHAP the 2015-16 season was above the national average from the 2014-15 season.
- Even when controlled for patients with vaccine allergies or documented deferrals documented vaccination rates were not at 100%, indicating need for better screening and documentation practices.
- Documentation issues were seen in survey data as well: 12% of “unvaccinated” patients surveyed had been vaccinated elsewhere.
- The majority of those contacted had no specific reason for refusal.
- One major barrier for both patients and resident physicians was a lack of time.
- 40% of patients in the surveyed group were fearful of side effects or doubted vaccination efficacy.

LIMITATIONS
- There was no available vaccination data from prior years for comparison.
- Screening intervention implemented clinic-wide; resident involvement limited to Friday clinic residents only; Vaccination rates reflect clinic-wide data.
- No ability to standardize discussion of vaccinations between resident physicians.
- Limited sample size which may not be representative of larger patient population.

NEXT STEPS
- Ongoing data collection regarding vaccination rates.
- Educational interventions which target areas of patient concerns, i.e., lack of efficacy/applicability or side effect profile.
- Efforts to improve documentation by office staff.