

Improvement to inpatient flow from ward to Radiology

Sarah Brown (Radiology), Ali Beshir & Russell Williams (Portering)

Abstract:

It had been identified that scanners were not being utilised fully with downtime noted due to delays in our inpatients arriving for their scheduled appointments. To overcome this problem, the Radiology and Portering teams agreed to partner with the aim of trialling a Coordinator role. Using volunteers from portering, the pilot took place initially on AMU & SAU and increased to other wards as the trial progressed. The coordinators were provided with training from Radiology and a robust communication plan was delivered to stakeholders to share the process being trialled. The results did not conclusively demonstrate any significant change to the outcome measures, but feedback from the wards and Radiology team showed that patient safety and experience had been positively impacted upon.

SMART Aim

The aim of the project was to reduce the downtime of scanners in Radiology & delays to “Red Flag” patients by 1st May 2022.

Plan

Following a workshop to look at how Portering services are being utilised to transport patients, it was identified that unnecessary delays were being seen when transporting inpatients for scheduled appointments at Radiology. Many causes were identified, including patient not being ready, not on the ward, nursing colleagues looking after patient not available to “release” the patient. This gave the reason why to provide a solution to improve the service for our patients and importantly, reduce the downtime of scanners which resulted from patients not arriving for their appointments as scheduled.

Do

To overcome the problem, it was decided to test out the role of a Portering coordinator, initially focusing on AMU and Sau.

This was then extended to other wards as the project progressed.

To enable this solution be tested, it required volunteers from portering services, access to Semahelix, CRIS and Teletracking.

It also required Standard work to be agreed, alongside training from the Radiology department to the Portering team.

Additionally, much communication was needed with the Wards to ensure all were aware and supportive of the concept.



The following process was tested out:

- Coordinator role (Porter) set up in office in the loading bay with access to a laptop and the necessary software programmes
- Coordinator logged onto Teletracking and CRIS to identify patients who had been booked for scans
- Coordinator contact the ward staff to confirm and request that patients made aware and made ready 2 hours prior to appointment time
- Porter goes to ward and discusses with patient the procedure using a crib sheet to ensure ready for the booked scan
- Porter transports patient to radiology department for scan

Study

Due to availability of volunteers, the coordinator role was only supported for 75% of the 5 – day working week. The data supports that on average one additional patient per day was seen. However, it was noted that the coordinator was often pulled away to undertake other tasks, due to staffing challenges in the portering team. This impacted on maintaining a service, with much variation that impacted on the outcomes being measured. Feedback from the Radiology department, was positive, but appreciated it was difficult to demonstrate an effective improvement, due to lack of capacity within the portering team. In regard to reducing the down times of scanners, the data did not conclusively support this. Patient experience and safety was impacted positively, due to improved communication between the radiology departments and the wards. As an example, patients who were required to have fasted prior to a scan were more aware of this, therefore, reducing previous cancellations.

Act

The Radiology department has recruited a team of Radiology porters and is in the process supporting them in their new role. When appropriate, the team will look at the learning from this project to identify further opportunities for incorporating some of the learning into their processes. The project was highly beneficial in testing out the coordinator role, but it was acknowledged that the data did not support taking this role on a permanent basis, but should the concept should not be discounted.