Reliable Data Collection: A Quality Improvement Project

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Background & Significance:
Two outpatient clinical teams within a community hospital system in Vermont devised multiple tools for data collection since the programs' inception. Data is essential to measure the productivity, utilization, and support of the programs. While previous tools met minimum requirements, they were labor intensive, prone to human error and not available at point-of-care. The teams are staffed by Registered Nurses, Social Work, Respiratory Therapy and Care Coordinators at different levels.

Clinical Question:
Can data collection and reporting tools be improved and integrated into EMR workflow, reduce manual practices, and improve efficiency and reliability?

Evidence:
Review of the literature was performed, all evidence-based articles support the need for accurate data collection and reporting. Clearly identifying a need for data to recognize trends, opportunities, improve quality of care and delivery.

Intervention Implementation:
The teams created an additional form in the EMR to enter and track patient information based on individual contacts with the patient. Once built, the template was tested by Nursing Informatics and super users. Education was provided visually by job aid, virtual educational sessions and in person support was available through and after the launch of the system on October 1, 2021.

Evaluation:
Chart abstraction at implementation, and for the first several months, was not achieved. The teams continued EMR data entry and resumed manual data entry paper forms to ensure information was captured. In May 2022, chart abstraction was successfully implemented and validated using the paper data entry tool. Using this opportunity, the teams worked through the barriers to reporting.

Results:
The goals of this project were met and both teams, in June 2022, were able to fully integrate their data collection into the EMR form. Data is accessible and reportable through the assistance of our analyst in a variety of grids, charts, and raw numbers.

Significance and Conclusion:
This project is of great significance to both programs, addressing both quality improvement and staff satisfaction. Currently there is one electronically based tool each staff member uses to document at point-of-care. Information is available for retrieval when saved into the EMR; with no further handling until the analyst performs an abstraction. Success of this direct-to-EMR data collection allows the teams to accommodate larger volumes of information, than the manual system.