Precision Your Practice: Documentation Domination

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Background/Introduction

In the emergency department (ED), the electronic medical record (EMR) systematically documents the patient's journey from initial presentation at triage with progressive recording of assessments, interventions, and patient responses performed by the healthcare team until their departure.

A preliminary audit of data collected in the ED revealed documentation vulnerabilities on high acuity Emergency Severity Index (ESI) Level 1 patients in alignment with critical care interventions recorded in the EMR. The correlation rate was 42% among 150 of the 450 treated. The ESI is a five-level triage algorithm tool used in the ED developed in 1999 to rapidly identify and score each patient's cue of treatment with Level 1 being critical and Level 5 least acute.

This project highlights the significant advantages of thorough and precise documentation by the ED nursing staff ensuring efficient operations of the healthcare system.

Objectives of Process Improvement Project

- Improve patient care with continuity, seamless information transfer, and real-time updates.
- Enhance communication by shared knowledge and reduction in errors.
- Compliance in standards to meet regulatory requirements and adherence to best practices.
- Improvement in quality with data collection for analysis of care trends and benchmarking efforts.
- Development of training through education tools and continuous improvement.

Intervention – Documentation Training

- Education on location in the EMR for documentation of patient care interventions. Specific location is essential to flow and continuity for all providers and to capture revenue.
- Education tool created included hospital policies, expectations, and key documentation points.
- Nurse Champions selected and trained with roll-out date of April 2024 for 100% of staff nurses.
- Audits completed May through July 2024 for compliance.

Method

Data Collection Period:

- January 1 to July 31, 2023, EMR audits for ESI Level 1 patients.

Statistical Analysis:

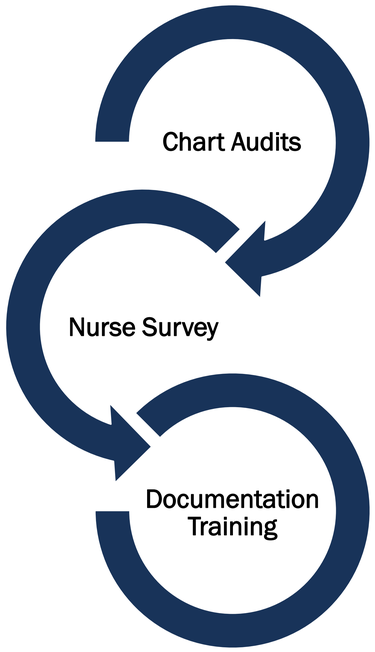
- The percentage of patients for which audits were completed that fell into the desired patient care intervention categories (critical care, one-on-one care, cardiac monitor, oxygen, isolation, and transport by RN to ICU/IMU) of analysis.
- Averages were taken to determine the adequacy of documentation training.

Findings from EMR Audit:

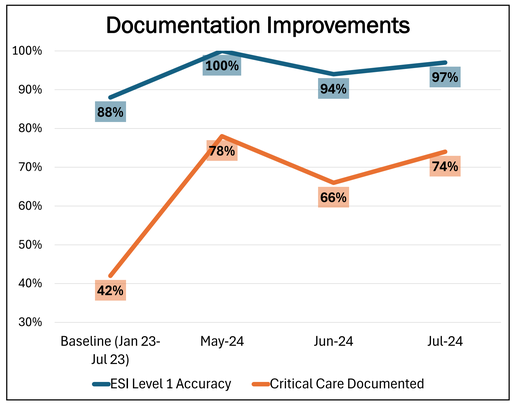
- 450 ESI Level 1 patients reviewed with key issue being documentation of patient care interventions.

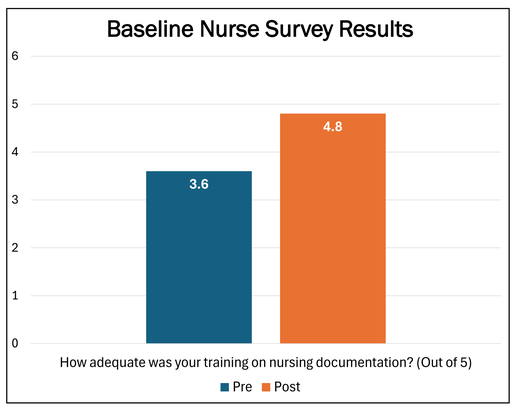
Survey and Observations:

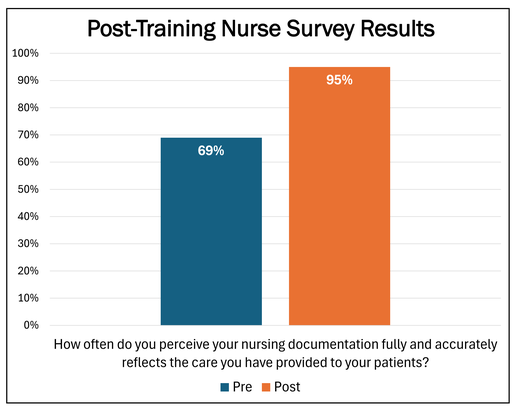
- Participants are registered nurses (RN) in a community ED. Survey purpose is to measure knowledge of documentation compliance and expectations with focus on current practices and barriers.



Analysis







Results/Implications

Results:

- Audits completed for assignment of ESI Level 1 patients in ED from May to July 2024 resulted in an improvement from a baseline of 88% to 97% and an improvement for critical care interventions documented from a baseline of 42% to 74%.
- Surveys completed by nursing staff show a 33% improvement in perception of training *accuracy* and a 38% improvement in perception of their *completeness* of documentation.

Implications:

- Inaccurate or missing documentation impacts patient safety, continuity of care, and revenue.
- Survey results revealed gaps in RN understanding of documentation requirements, location in EMR to chart care interventions, and compliance expectations.
- Barriers identified highlight time constraints, lack of training, and or unclear guidelines that impact documentation quality.

Future Actions

- Sustaining change includes targeted training and education with ongoing quarterly refreshers, along with prevalence audits.
- Clear documentation protocols with checklists and templates to enhance nursing documentation.
- Address barriers by evaluating resource allocation and streamline processes.
- Leveraging technology with EMR enhancements and data utilization from monthly chart audits.

Acknowledgments

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ED Documentation Nurse Champions
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References

References provided upon request