

5) A Medication Prior Authorization Pilot Program in Primary Care Practices Increases Efficiency and Patient Care Outcomes

New England Quality Care Alliance (NEQCA)

Alison Nogi, NEQCA Director of Communications; anogi@neqca.org

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A physician network implemented a medication prior authorization (PA) pilot program in January 2015. The purpose of the Medication Prior Authorization Pilot Program is to alleviate physician and practice administrative burden and to improve the quality of care. The program utilizes Certified Pharmacy Technicians (CPhTs), under the direct supervision of a clinical pharmacist, to submit medication PAs on behalf of physicians. The Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPhT) is virtually integrated into the practice workflow. Prior authorization (PA) requests are triaged by practice staff to a Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPhT) via the electronic medical record. The Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPhT) submits the prior authorization (PA) and communicates the outcome to the patient, physician and practice staff. If the prior authorization (PA) is approved the availability of the medication for the patient is communicated. If the prior authorization (PA) is denied the physician is provided recommendations consisting of alternative agents and next steps.

The applicant is an award winning, not for profit, physician network of a Massachusetts hospital. It is comprised of nearly 1,800 physicians located in practices across Eastern Massachusetts, from the Merrimack Valley to Cape Cod.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- Physician acceptance is high at 75%.
- Satisfaction surveys pre/post-implementation indicate that 100% of the physicians/practice staff find the program “useful” or “very useful” and the implementation “smooth” or “very smooth”.
- Dedicated practice time for PAs has been reduced, resulting in a 5:1 return on investment.
- On average, 1 CPhT can support 30 physicians and their staff.
- Each physician saves an estimated 40 hours/year and their staff 80+ hours/year.
- There have been 516 PAs submitted, 243 of which were approved, with 206 denied and 67 other.
- Once assigned to a CPhT, 92% of PAs are submitted and 54% of PAs are completely resolved within 24 hours.
- The average time it takes to research and submit a PA is 28 minutes.
- Physicians implement the recommendation 84% of the time.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Physician acceptance of the program is high with satisfaction surveys indicating that physicians/practice staff found the program “useful” or “very useful” and the implementation “smooth” or “very smooth”.
- CPhTs are a cost effective resource (5:1 return on investment) for managing the medication PA process allowing for physicians and practice staff to redirect their time to other patient-care activities.
- The program has improved efficiency of the PA process resulting in patients receiving the appropriate medication sooner.