Evaluating benefits is an important component of the connecting South West Ontario (cSWO) Program that helps to support and demonstrate the realization of health system benefits through the adoption of an electronic health record (EHR). By pursuing the measurement of organizational value (improvements in the efficiency of care delivery such as time-savings and redirected resources) and clinical value (patients undergo fewer unnecessary tests, patients have improved access to care), patients ultimately benefit from higher quality, better informed clinical decision-making.

The cSWO Benefits Realization program uses a research-based approach to identify areas of clinical best practice that are affected by the use of the electronic health record (EHR), and works collaboratively with clinicians to understand the value of the EHR. This formative evaluation process informs change management and adoption, and enables clinicians to use the EHR more effectively. This research does not include the use of any personal health information.

This document is one in a series of case studies which describe the clinical value of the EHR in different clinical settings and contexts, particularly with respect to clinical best practices. The work of the cSWO Benefits Realization program is ongoing; depending on the circumstance, these cases occasionally raise questions for further investigation, and clinicians are invited to participate in benefits evaluation to continue to develop these answers.

Value statement

Using the cSWO Regional Clinical Viewer, ClinicalConnect™, the Grey Bruce Health Services (GBHS) site of the South West Regional Cancer Program is able to access patient information in a timely manner which has allowed for a decrease in wait time from referral to consult and improved patient satisfaction of care.

Cancer care close to home at Grey Bruce Health Services

In the Grey Bruce region, approximately 984 people are diagnosed with cancer per year (Grey Bruce Health Unit, 2014). Led by a multi-disciplinary team, Grey Bruce Health Services (GBHS) provides assessment, treatment, follow-up, education, and supportive care for cancer patients in the Grey and Bruce regions (GBHS, n.d.).

The GBHS site is part of the South West Regional Cancer Program and allows patients to receive care close to home (GBHS, n.d.). Referrals to one of three oncologists are made by a primary care provider or by GBHS surgeons. Once the GBHS Cancer Centre Manager receives the referral, all applicable test results from external centres are compiled and the patient is then scheduled for an appointment with the specialist according to the level of clinical urgency.

Improving the referral to consult process for cancer care at GBHS using ClinicalConnect

In order to provide quality care close to home, GBHS leverages ClinicalConnect to ensure that they have the relevant patient health information in order to properly triage and book an appointment with the oncologist. ClinicalConnect allows the oncology staff at GBHS to locate test results and improve the referral to consult process. Prior to ClinicalConnect, patients experienced additional wait times as information was gathered manually to inform the process of triaging of referrals based on clinical urgency (Figure 1).
Regional Cancer Programs, funded by Cancer Care Ontario, are responsible for meeting targets and improving wait times for cancer care (CCO, 2015). The targeted wait time from referral to specialist and specialist consult with a patient is 14 days (CCO, 2016a). Within the South West Regional Cancer Centre, approximately 65 per cent of patients were seen within the target wait time in October 2016 (CCO, 2016b).

Access to timely information using the ClinicalConnect viewer has led to important wait time improvements for patients receiving care through the GBHS Cancer Centre. Prior to ClinicalConnect, referral to consult wait times included an approximate 1-2 week wait for referral information from other facilities. Since GBHS Cancer Centre staff have been able to access the necessary information through ClinicalConnect the referral process has improved resulting in the opportunity for more residents of Grey Bruce to get the care they need within wait time expectations.

Testimonial

“ClinicalConnect is incredibly valuable for imaging and notes in real-time to enable to make a plan more quickly. The timeliness of information is the increased value. The right information at the right time improves patient experience.”

Saskia MacMillan, Manager, GBHS Cancer Centre

Questions

For questions, comments, or to participate in cSWO’s Benefits Realization program, please contact: Jennifer Kehoe, Benefits Realization Lead, Change Management and Adoption Delivery Partner, SW CCAC: Jennifer.kehoe@sw.ccac-ont.ca

Sources