Improving the Inpatient Referral System in the Acute Medical Unit

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Introduction
AMU receives high number of patients with variety of medical conditions. Specialist team input is part of patient care. We found that patients were waiting longer for review when a referral was made to a specialty team which not only impacted on patient care but also on the flow of patients within the department.

Aim
To Improve the Inpatient speciality referral system in AMU

Objectives
1. To Identify:
   i) Time taken for review of the patient after referral
   ii) Impact on length of stay of patients in AMU
   iii) Specialty Inpatient Referral process
2. Goals:
   i) Minimise avoidable delays for specialty review
   ii) Improve referral pathway
   iii) Improve junior doctors efficiency

Methodology
1. Location: AMU, EDGH
2. Time: Nov-Dec, 2020: 3 weeks - continuous data
3. All patients admitted to AMU screened who required a specialist input as per Consultant PTWR
4. Data Collected:
   • Date/Time of referral
   • Specialty referred
   • Date/Time seen by the Speciality team
   • Reviewed in AMU or outside AMU
   • Discharges from AMU – any delay in referral?
5. Source: Medical notes, Eresearcher, Evolve
6. Junior doctor Survey post intervention (Google Survey)

Results and Concerns
1. 185/39% of 475 patients required a specialist input
2. Gastroenterology, Cardiology, Respiratory and Oncology comprised of 60% of referrals.
3. 33% of referrals were seen < 24hrs, 22% referrals 24-48hrs, 8% >48hrs. 17% data inadequate.
4. 24 (13.6%) patients were identified as avoidable delayed discharge due to delayed speciality review.
5. Post Intervention Junior doctors survey: (see chart above).
6. Overall reduction in ward work by 16.7 mins per referral (generating to submission).

Conclusion:
The flow of patients in AMU can also be improved by streamlining the Hospital Referral System. This provides timely patient care ensuring positive patient experience whilst in hospital. Electronic referral system was found to be an efficient means of making an inpatient referral. This project has also helped improve junior doctors morale, efficiency and communication which had a positive impact given the challenges of the pandemic in the hospital.

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