Improving Radiologists' Access to Other Doctors: A Quality Improvement Project

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BACKGROUND

Radiologists depend on timely communication with referring teams to clarify requests, convey urgent findings and coordinate care. At William Harvey Hospital, radiology staff reported difficulty reaching doctors in other specialties because contact details were inaccurate or did not identify the requesting clinician. A quality improvement project was undertaken to improve this pathway.

AIM

To make cross-specialty contact faster and more reliable, with at least 50% of radiologists reaching the intended clinician within ten minutes and on the first attempt.

METHODS

A seven-question baseline survey was emailed to 35 radiology consultants and trainees; 28 responded. Measures included ease of contact, time to target, first-attempt success and barriers. The leading problem was that the supplied number did not correspond to the person requesting the study, followed by other inaccurate contact details. A colour-coded Excel directory was therefore created containing verified ward doctors' room extensions, specialty on-call bleeps, emergency department numbers and radiology department extensions across the Trust. Details were checked in person and compared with the existing Induction app, with discrepancies corrected in the new directory. The same questions were repeated after implementation; 19 staff responded.

RESULTS

Before intervention, 7.14% rated contacting other doctors as easy, 32.14% reached their target within ten minutes, and 14.29% usually or always succeeded on the first attempt. Following implementation, these measures improved to 52.63%, 78.95% and 63.16%, respectively. No post-intervention respondent reported being unable to make contact. Overall, 73.60% agreed that the directory improved access to other doctors, including 63.16% who strongly agreed, and 88.89% considered it sufficiently comprehensive.

CONCLUSION

An accessible, locally verified contact directory substantially improved radiologists' reported ability to reach clinical colleagues quickly and at the first attempt, exceeding both project targets. Maintaining named ownership, scheduled verification and periodic remeasurement should help sustain reliability as contact details change.