Administrative Staff Work Assessment in Advance of PFA Rollout

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SUMMARY: Patient Friendly Access (PFA) is a centralized-scheduling department within UVA. Pediatric GI is the third clinic to transfer responsibility for scheduling calls to the central team, away from the administrative team. The rollover was initially attempted in January, but was unsuccessful due to the lack of experience of the schedulers and the volume of triage messages for the Peds GI clinic. In advance of the July rollout, PFA staff were further trained, but an assessment was needed to determine the level of work required to be absorbed by the triage nurses and other staff. OSE found that close to half of the AA’s time was spent supporting the nursing team, which would need continued monitoring to determine the need for additional support. We also found opportunities to reduce the workload on the staff by reserving urgent appointments to reduce wasted time searching for appointment slots to double book.

Tasks Performed by Peds GI Administrative Assistant

School of Medicine
- Coordinating paperwork
- Updated templates in Outlook
- Schedule attorney call
- Help Desk/IT request from doctor

Office Care Team
- Patient requests for doctor or nursing consult to ask questions and discuss symptom changes and treatment plans
- Patient, pharmacy or treatment facility requests for prescriptions, orders or charts to be sent or resent
- Patient requests for results from labs, study, etc
- Letters to schools, camps, and patients

PF/Scheduling
- Patient or referring provider calls to request an urgent appointment
- Patient calls to schedule, cancel or reschedule appointment
- Communicate appointment changes to PFA and monitors to ensure changes made
- Update patient contact information in Epic
- Schedule attorney call
- Patient or referring provider calls to request an urgent appointment
- Requests for technical support

Miscellaneous
- Maintain general email inbox for various issues (related to providers, office care team and appointment schedules)
- BIR issues (paycheck, PTO, etc)
- Manage office supplies, paper mail
- Requests for technical support

Exploration

Through 30 hours of direct observation of the AA’s tasks, OSE determined that she spent her time divided among supporting School of Medicine physicians, supporting the triage nurses, scheduling patients’ appointments and general office tasks.

Evaluation

A deeper dive showed the volume of incoming communications received by the AA. She typically received 10 requests per hour, resulting in wasted time while she reacquaints herself with the task she was performing.

Recommendations

Analysis of the appointment requests the AA received showed an opportunity to reduce the time burden. Because appointment schedules were booked 4-6 weeks out, if a patient needed an urgent appointment, the AA and/or nurses would need to spend an extra 5 minutes looking through the schedules to find an acceptable time to squeeze in an appointment. OSE recommends reserving urgent appointments to accommodate patients who need to see the physician within the next two weeks.

Additionally, OSE recommends closely monitoring nursing workloads after the transition to PFA-scheduled clinic appointments and the dissolution of the AA role to ensure a manageable workload.

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