Improving Completion and Documentation of Diabetic Foot Exams: A Quality Improvement Project at ECU Family Medicine

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BACKGROUND

- Diabetic foot exams are important for early detection of diabetic neuropathy and prevention of diabetic foot ulcers. Foot exams also allow early detection and appropriate management of existing ulcers.
- For this reason, it is recommended that diabetic patients have foot exams annually.
- Diabetic foot ulcers are associated with 2.5-fold risk of death compared with diabetic patients without foot ulcers.
- Racial and ethnic minorities admitted to the hospital with diabetic foot infections have significantly higher risk of major amputation and longer hospital stay.

PROJECT AIM

Specific Aim: By January 31, 2021, we will increase the number of diabetic foot exams completed during patients’ visits to the ECU Family Medicine Buccaneer Module by 3% by reminding providers of foot exams and appropriate documentation via notecards on each computer.

Global Aim: Over the next 6 months, we will increase the number of diabetic foot exams completed during patients’ visits to the ECU Family Medicine Buccaneer Module to 75%.

PROJECT DESIGN/STRATEGY

- The Buccaneer Module of ECU Family Medicine is one of four modules in which patients can be seen. Providers include residents, attending physicians, and physician extenders.
- Percentages of completed diabetic foot exams have been decreasing since the start of COVID-19 within the Buccaneer module of ECU Family Medicine.
- This is believed to be secondary to lower numbers of in-person visits, as well as inaccurate documentation within the EHR. While it may be documented within a patient note, it is often not documented within the health maintenance information, which is what is used to track success.
- The method for this quality improvement project will be placing notecards at provider computers reminding all providers to document diabetic foot exams within the health maintenance information in EPIC.

CHANGES MADE (PDSA CYCLES) AND RESULTS

PDSA Cycle 1: Notecards with instructions for provider documentation of diabetic foot exams in EPIC posted within eyesight of computers where documentation is completed.
- Implemented on October 26, 2020
- Improvement of 7% to date since the implementation of notecards

Data for Buccaneer Foot Exams:
- May 46%
- June 44%
- July 42%
- August 44%
- September 44%
- October 47%
- November 47%
- December 50%

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