

Endocrinology + Primary Care Practices Care Coordination Projects

CMU Health Department of Endocrinology

Additional Access E-Consults to improve access to Endocrinology

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The Challenge

Access to endocrinology care for patients with type 2 diabetes is often limited due to provider shortages and long wait times. As a result, many patients experience delays in receiving specialized care, which can lead to suboptimal disease management and increased risk of complications. There is a need for a more efficient and scalable approach to connect patients with endocrinology expertise. Therefore we focused on developing a way to provide access to endocrinology for patients with Type 2 diabetes through e-consults.

Root Causes

1. Limited access

Endocrinology new patient appointments can take some time to schedule.

2. Determining PCP Inquiry vs. Endo Referral Identifying whether a primary care driven inquiry makes sense timewise/financially, or if sending a referral to endocrinology is more beneficial to both the patient and specialist.

3. Patient Barriers

Factors such as low health literacy, transportation challenges, financial toxicity, and competing life demands may prevent patients from seeking or following through with specialty care.

Importance

Providing a means for patients needing Endocrinology access by collaborating with primary care to help manage their patients within their own office. E-consults allow specialists to provide assistance to the primary care provider without the patient having to be sent to the specialist.

Goals

Our target was to get at least one patient all the way through the e-consult process and be reimbursed. We also attempted to identify the length of time it would take for the entire process to be completed, and then determine if this was most efficient approach.

Current State

We continue to identify patients for whom our primary care partner can send e-consults. Our goal is to determine whether e-consults should remain in use or if direct referrals to Endocrinology would be more effective. Throughout the process, communication has been effective and well-coordinated.

Successes

We successfully completed an e-consult between Dr. Marshall and Dr. Habib. Dr. Habib was able to put together a comprehensive questionnaire that Dr. Marshall was able to use when requesting the e-consult. The information shared back to the primary care was completed in a timely fashion, and any additional questions were answered when applicable. Successful billing was completed as well.

Barriers

Barriers identified include the limited time that staff and providers have to review the cases for a low reimbursement. Another barrier was making sure Endocrinology had all needed documentation. Obtaining patient consent was also a barrier identified.

Recommendations

Our next steps include keeping open communication with our primary care partner on potential e-consults when needed.