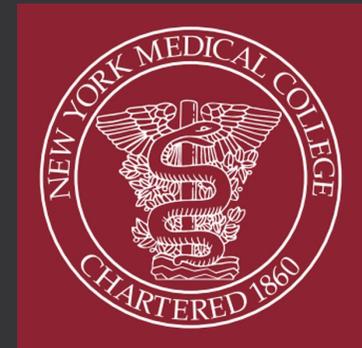
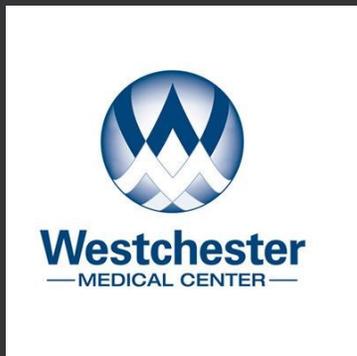


We're All in This  
Together



# Authors and Disclosures

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- The authors have no disclosures.



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# Outline

- The Radiologist-Clinician Relationship
  - Importance
  - Impact of PACS Systems
  - Key Components
  - Methods for Improvement
- The Radiologist-Patient Relationship
  - Importance
  - Key Components
  - Methods for Improvement

# Communication is KEY:

- Radiology practices are becoming larger, more specialized, and increasingly integrated into other parts of the healthcare system.
- The ability of a radiology department to provide safe, timely, and effective care increasingly depends on the sophistication of its communications methods.
- Effectively communication with referring physicians, medical colleagues, and patients is paramount to demonstrating the value the radiologist has as a member of a patient's integrated care team.

# Radiologist-Clinician: Importance

- Dedicating time and resources to clinician communication can decrease efficiency, but plays an important role, both for educational purposes and patient care
- One study from Italy found evidence that consultations are time consuming, but do have significant beneficial impact on patient care and treatment
  - 20 departmental radiologists had average of 3.95 contacts per day for a total of 7.08 hours of interaction per day
  - Initial diagnosis was changed in 50% of cases and the treatment plan was changed in 60% of cases
  - This was in agreement with background research, including another survey study showing 37.5% change in diagnosis or management

# Radiologist-Clinician: PACS Systems

- Incorporated into radiology practice to a large scale in the 1990s, PACS Systems have had huge benefits to the field, including increased efficiency, wider availability and improved reliability
- However, some suggest that it has also increased the separation between radiologist and clinician and strained personal communication
- Early studies found that PACS implementation decreased consultation by 44-82%
- Fueled by the capabilities of PACS systems, increased utilization of teleradiology seems to further amplify this separation between two of the medical team members

# Radiologist-Clinician: Key Components

- While the radiologist's historical nickname of the "doctor's doctor" has undergone criticism, it does suggest a need for strong communication with other physicians
- Effectiveness of any physician is largely dependent on three factors
  - Clinical Competence
  - **Effective Communication**
  - Ability to carry an ethical decision process in the patient's best interests
- Principal components of **radiologist communication** has been investigated in five sections
  - Quality of Written Communication
  - Quality of Oral Communication
  - Impact of Economy
  - Ethical Aspects
  - Improvement in Communication

# Radiologist-Clinician: Methods for Improvement

- A major obstacle pointed out by Stephen R. Baker is the inconvenience of radiology room visits, thus, he proposed optimizing location close to clinical wards, outpatient facility or emergency department
  - One study implemented this proposal and found that there was a significant increase in percentage of visits and critical test result management messages when reading rooms were located in clinical care areas vs hospital basements
- Model for improvement professionalism and communication was documented at Cincinnati Children's Hospital
  - Key component of this improvement process included a department scorecard for overall performance as well as individual evaluations in communication skills and report quality

# Radiologist-Clinician: Methods for Improvement

- Crucial to the success of any communication is having a sense of what the other party is asking for
  - One possible suggestion is to include a referring doctor's phone number on the request form
- Face-to-face interaction, either scheduled or impromptu, provide an important time to clarify these needs as well as provide stronger input into aspects of patient care
  - Scheduling radiology rounds or conferences can serve to increase this interaction time as well as provide other physicians with a familiarity to the department in order to increase impromptu visits with patient care questions

# Radiologist-Patient: Importance

- Studies have estimated that around 30% of cases of patient dissatisfaction are due to poor communication between patients, families and health care professionals.
- Much research has demonstrated the importance of strong patient communication to the overall patient experience
  - One study found significantly higher overall satisfaction following an intervention when they received education, stress counseling or negotiation
- Another important effect of patient communication is a well-demonstrated correlation between poor communication and medical malpractice suits
  - Some studies have shown this to be a stronger predictor than adverse outcomes

# Radiologist-Patient: Key Components

- While many principles of communication between physicians are also important for patient interactions, a few aspects of this relationship are particularly important. These include:
  - Sensitivity
  - Courtesy
  - Compassion
  - Appropriateness
  - Honesty
  - Openness
  - Practical Tips

# Radiologist-Patient: Methods for Improvement

- Preemptive measures to improve radiologist-patient interactions can have a significant impact
  - These include stressing professionalism with handouts or meetings
- Post-communication feedback is crucial to improvement
  - This can either come in the form of specific patient surveys and/or a site where patients can be referred to provide their own feedback on positive or negative communications
  - This feedback should be used on both a personal level for individual improvement as well as structural level through new policies and procedures
- It is important in academic settings to particularly emphasize this among residents, who may have even more communication with referring physicians

# Radiologist-Patient: Methods for Improvement

- Methods for emphasizing patient communication skills with residents include:
  - Exercises in critiquing examples of poor communication in order to gain insight into one's own personal areas of improvement
  - Encouraging and incorporating constructive feedback from observing attendings
  - Access to resources targeting specific barriers to patient communication including how to assess understanding and communicating with speakers of other languages

# Take Home Messages

- Changes in practice may be making radiologist communication more difficult
- Communication strategies and skills play an important role in both the radiologist-clinician and radiologist-patient relationships
- Methods for improving radiologist-clinician communication include scheduling dedicated rounds/conference time, encouraging in-person consultations through optimizing location or accessibility ease and obtaining feedback
- Methods for improving radiologist-patient communication include distribution of professionalism materials, obtaining post-interaction feedback from patients and educating residents on communication skills and possible obstacles to communication

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