Impact of the 21st Century Cures Act on Breast Center Patient Phone Communication
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Background

- 21st Century Cures Act
  - Passed in 2016
  - Promotes easier electronic access, exchange, and use of health information
  - Mandates that patients have access to medical records including clinical notes, test results, and medications
  - Prevents “information blocking” of patient medical data

What ONC’s Cures Act Final Rule Means for Patients

- Ease of Access to Their Records
- Protecting Patient Privacy and Security
- Promoting the Ability to Shop for Care and Manage Costs

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Background

- Implementation of the Cures Act occurred at our institution in October 2020
- After implementation, full text of clinical notes, pathology and radiology reports were immediately released to patients when finalized

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Background

• Patients at our Breast Center have access to supplemental informational material in addition to released reports:
  • Imaging exams and biopsy reports
  • Pathology diagnoses and reports
Purpose

• To evaluate whether implementation of the Cures Act was associated with an increase in the number of incoming phone calls to our Breast Center
Methods

• We collected volume of incoming phone calls to the Breast Center from January 1, 2020 to May 7, 2021
• Phone call data was collected for:
  • Breast Center main phone number (volume of calls)
  • Individual phone lines to Breast Center nurses (volume and duration of calls)
• Parameters were compared before and after Cures Act implementation date (10/24/2020) using mixed-effect negative binomial regression models adjusting for day of the week and random effects for individual phone lines
Results – Main Breast Center Phone Lines

• Overall, implementation of the Cures Act was associated with an increase in the mean number of calls to the Breast Center.

• The degree of increase depended on the day of the week, which was greatest on Mondays:
  • Monday: **17% increase** (164.5 to 192.2, p<0.001)
  • Tuesday: 7% increase (162.9 to 174.2, P<0.001)
  • Wednesday: 5% increase (155.3 to 163.4, p=0.009)
  • Thursday: No change (154.9 to 154.7, p=0.95)
  • Friday: 6% increase (144.9 to 153.5, p=0.004)
Results – Nursing Phone Lines

- Overall 4% increase in the number of phone calls after Cures Act implementation not significant (13.7 to 14.2, p=0.4)
- **Increase** in average call duration from 3.2 mins to 3.6 mins (p=0.002)
Conclusions

- Implementation of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Cures Act with immediate release of imaging, biopsy, and pathology results was associated with
  - A significant increase to the mean number of phone calls to the Breast Center, particularly on Mondays
  - A significant increase in call duration to nurses

- Providing ready access to imaging and pathology results for patients increases patient contact to the Breast Center, and may have significant downstream effects on provider and staff workload