Pennsylvania Passes Patient Notification Laws For Imaging

Pennsylvania is the first state to pass legislation that requires radiologists to notify the patient or patient’s representative of “significant abnormalities” found on imaging. Act 112 – Patient Test Result Information Act became law on December 24, 2018. The radiologist must provide the patient (or his/her representative) with the name of the ordering practitioner, the date the test was performed, the date the results were sent to the ordering practitioner and the contact information necessary for the patient to obtain a copy of the full report. They must also include the following statements:

• You are receiving this notice as a result of a determination by your diagnostic imaging service that further discussions of your test results are warranted and would be beneficial to you.

• The complete results of your test or tests have been or will be sent to the health care practitioner that ordered the test or tests. It is recommended that you contact your health care practitioner to discuss your results as soon as possible.

This notification must occur within 20 days following the results being sent to the ordering practitioner and may be sent by one of the following methods: mail, email, automatic alert from an EHR, fax, or provided directly to the patient at the time of service. If the patient is given a copy at the time of service, he/she must acknowledge the receipt by signing the medical record.

There are exceptions to Act 112 notifications. These are routine OB ultrasounds to monitor fetal development, inpatient or emergency department services, and diagnostic radiographs.

“Significant abnormality” is defined under the Act as “A finding by a diagnostic imaging service of an abnormality or anomaly which would cause a reasonably prudent person to seek additional or follow-up medical care within three months.”

Time will tell if this law will gain traction with other states.
Breast screening patients have high expectations. Here’s how to position your organization for success.

10:15 AM on March 26, 2019 by Catherine Kosse and Erin Lane. The Advisory Board Company is the owner and publisher of this article. Editor’s note: This post was updated on April 11, 2019.

Sixty-four percent of women aged 40 or older receive biennial mammography screenings, and over the next 10 years, this population will likely grow with an estimated exam volume increase of 7.4%. To secure current market share and attract new patients, imaging programs must differentiate their breast screening services from competitors by meeting rising patient expectations. A new study provides insight into mammography patient preferences for results delivery. So, what do patients want, and how can you deliver on new expectations?

Patients expect prompt screening results, follow-up

For the study, published in the Journal of the American College of Radiology, researchers surveyed over 2,000 women at two academic breast imaging centers in Richmond, Virginia to pinpoint patient preferences for results delivery. Notably, almost half of the women surveyed preferred mammography results within 24 hours of their appointment. Specifically, 24.8% are willing to wait at the appointment for results and 24.4% would like results within 24 hours. Compounding this finding, 41.5% of patients said they prefer follow-up appointments scheduled the next day.

This study underscores the importance of streamlined breast screening services, from results delivery to follow-up care, to increase patient satisfaction. Screenings alone are a revenue source, but they can also lead to significant downstream care. Failure to meet patient expectations risks losing future patient care for this consumer-driven population. In fact, Advisory Board surveys show that 61% of breast cancer patients changed cancer centers due to dissatisfaction, more than any other tumor type.

3 key components of highly efficient mammography programs

The survey underscores the importance of providing efficient results delivery and coordinated follow-up care. We recently spoke with best-in-class breast centers and uncovered three steps to success:

1. Enable real-time radiologist reads: Station radiologists on-site or provide technology that enables radiologists to access images immediately after the exam. Then, create strong technologist-radiologist communication channels to promptly address patient history questions or paperwork issues. This approach ensures reads are completed efficiently and reduces potential delays in the patient receiving results.

2. Leverage technology to streamline results delivery: Once the radiologist reads the exams, expedite the patient-friendly follow-up instructions with technology. Vendors, such as PenRad, allow programs to store multiple pre-templated follow-up letters with space for individual notes. Programs should ensure templates include language about breast density in preparation for the new federal proposal for breast density reporting language (see DenseBreast-info.org for more on the FDA’s proposal). Additionally, radiologists must recommend next steps, such as an annual mammogram exam, a follow-up diagnostic exam, or a surgeon consultation.

3. Provide or schedule next steps promptly: Address abnormal results quickly to decrease patient anxiety and provide timely diagnoses. Create time blocks in the clinic schedule or leverage additional staff to perform diagnostic mammograms or other follow-up exams same or next day. If necessary, schedule consultations with breast surgeon or interventional radiologists before a patient’s departure. Read full article here.

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