

Closing the loop on actionable findings at Einstein Healthcare Network

Improving patient care and quality outcomes with PowerConnect Actionable Findings.

Challenge

- Need for optimized patient safety and quality outcomes
- Desire to reduce communication breakdowns
- Help with efforts to meet actionable findings notification closure rate goals
- Make it easier to comply with audit requirements for actionable findings

Solution

- PowerConnect Actionable Findings
- PowerScribe

Results

- Achieved 100% closure rate within 3-day targeted time-frame for significant (non-emergent) actionable findings
- Increased solution utilization by 11% on average year over year
- Improved referring provider satisfaction and participation
- Decreased physician interruptions and streamlined workflow
- Documented, trackable actionable findings communications support audit and compliance requirements

As the largest independent academic medical center in Philadelphia, Einstein Healthcare Network is guided by its mission to provide exceptionally intelligent and responsive healthcare and education for its patients. Within radiology, that mission is reflected in careful attention to every aspect of the patient's journey, from scheduling and image acquisition to reporting and follow-up. As part of this focus, the organization's team of 30 radiologists is committed to closing the loop on critical results and actionable findings, including incidental findings that may not be directly related to the original reason for the exam.



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Peter Wang, MD

Director of Body CT and MRI
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All too often, healthcare organizations rely on manual methods of communication, such as phone calls to referring providers, for documenting and communicating actionable findings. These time-consuming and labor-intensive steps negatively affect radiologists’ productivity and satisfaction as well as the organization’s ability to meet auditing and patient safety goals. “It is up to the radiologist to make the calls for these types of findings, and as you can imagine, having to do that is very disruptive,” says Peter Wang, MD, Einstein’s Director of Body CT and MRI.

The risk of patients “falling through the cracks” due to lack of communication and follow-up is a serious problem that has been documented in at least three recent research studies. In April 2014, one study reported a 71% follow-up failure rate in patients with incidental pulmonary nodules. Another study in November 2017 found that 57% of follow-up recommendations were not completed on time, while a third from March 2019 reported that up to 60% of ED patients did not receive recommended follow-up exams within one year.

Poor patient outcomes are not the only concern when actionable findings are not adequately communicated or followed up. There are also significant medico-legal risks, and medical malpractice claims continue to rise. In fact, a law in Pennsylvania (Patient Test Results Information Act, or Act 112) requires radiologists to notify patients of certain findings directly. Regardless of legislative requirements, all healthcare organizations and their patients can benefit from processes and technologies that effectively and efficiently close the loop on actionable findings.

Einstein’s radiology team implemented a number of “fail-safe” strategies to improve actionable findings notification and communication; their approach meant

automating the process as much as possible within both the radiology and referring provider workflows and being able to track and report on notifications to ensure regulatory compliance.

Bringing test results and notification management directly into the workflow

Einstein Healthcare Network takes advantage of PowerConnect Actionable Findings to automatically manage patients’ clinically actionable results and deliver important communications to care teams both inside and outside its network. This solution, which integrates with both PowerScribe One and PowerScribe 360 Reporting, offers a versatile, in-workflow approach to bringing test results and notification management directly into the reporting process.

Instead of picking up the phone, radiologists like Dr. Wang can initiate any necessary communications directly from their workstation while creating the patient’s report. “One of the biggest benefits,” he says, “is the workflow integration with what’s on the desktop. It’s virtually seamless. If a finding requires some type of follow-up or action, it’s very easy to create and send a message directly to the provider using any means that the provider prefers. It is right there at our fingertips.”

When a radiologist creates a message within PowerScribe, the actionable findings solution not only alerts the ordering clinician of the pending result, it also can escalate the notification according to preset rules and urgency. Moreover, the entire communication sequence is automatically documented to support the organization’s audit and compliance requirements.

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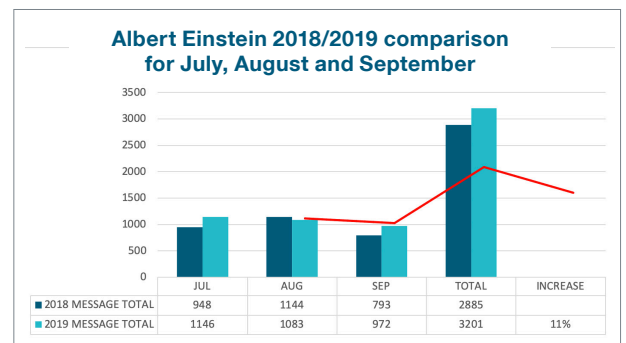
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Radiologists at Einstein rest assured their messages have been received by clinicians

“We’ve made dramatic improvements within our department,” notes Dr. Wang. “We categorized our findings into two classifications: significant and emergent. For the significant findings, 100% of physicians are picking up their messages within the required three-day timeframe. For the emergent cases, the timeframe is only one hour, so the rate is less than 100% but still quite good.”

For those emergent findings, if the provider has not retrieved the message within the one-hour time period, the Nuance solution alerts the radiologist using a backup communication method to ensure they close the loop on these essential communications. “We can rest assured knowing messages are received in a timely manner, and we can pick up the phone for the more critical things that need to be acted on right that minute,” explains Dr. Wang.

Dr. Wang notes that the institution continues to refine ways to use the solution, with an 11% uptick in automated notifications year over year. According to Dr. Wang, “This can translate into measurable time savings for radiologists, which can help alleviate burnout and improve compliance. For example, in January 2019, we achieved an approximate time savings of almost 176 hours for the radiology team overall, based on automated notifications vs. manual phone calls.”



Feedback from the Einstein physician community has been positive; the providers appreciate communications that do not disrupt their workflow, and the ability to pick up their messages when it makes the most sense for them to do so. “Some of our providers prefer to get a text message, rather than a fax, for these actionable findings. That’s the beauty of this system—providers can set their own preferences for how they want to receive messages,” says Dr. Wang.

Above all, radiologists at Einstein believe the Actionable Findings solution is positively affecting patient outcomes and safety. Dr. Wang sums up the value to the radiology care team by explaining, “As we continually monitor our performance, we can ask ourselves: Are we sending these types of results for every pneumothorax? Every intracranial hemorrhage? Now, we can get reports to see how we’re doing, know if we’re meeting guidelines, and find new ways to improve.”

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