

EKG Timeliness: Going Against the Grain

Purpose and Description:

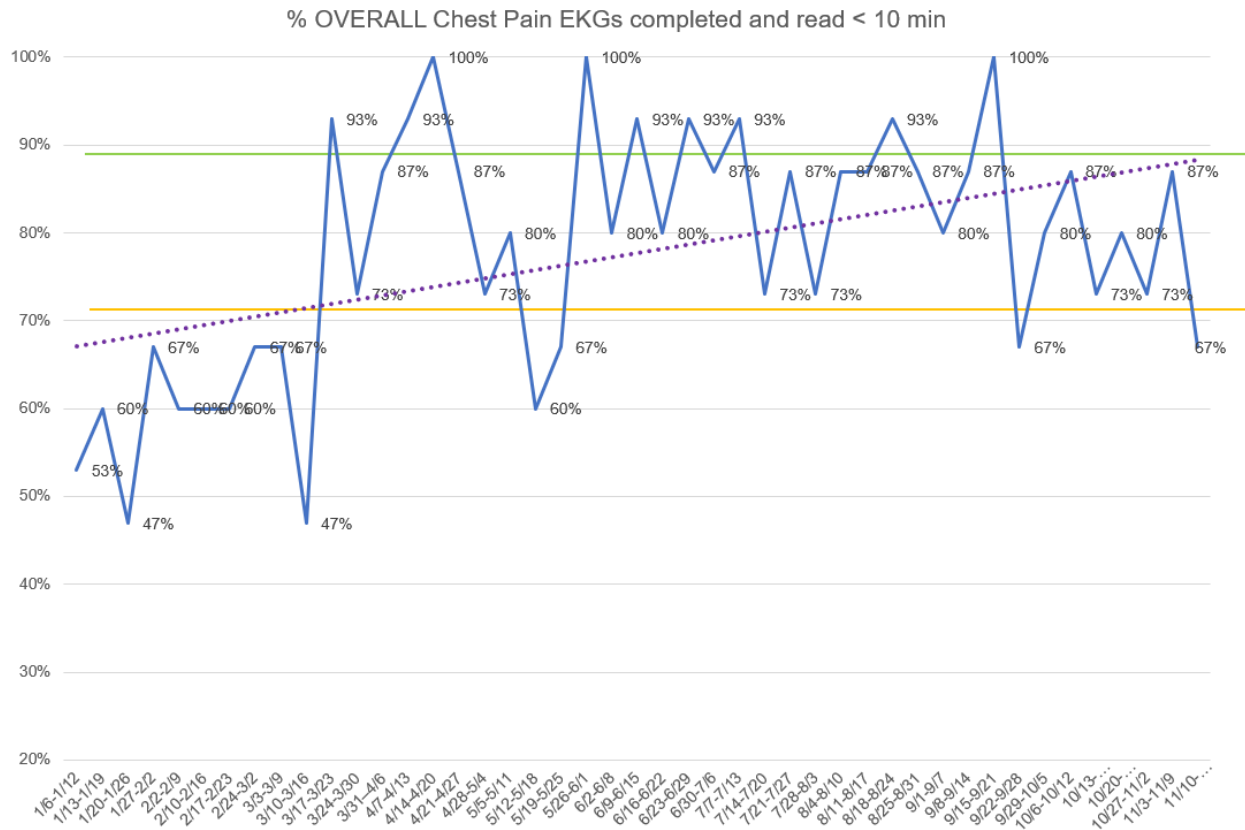
The goal for all patients presenting to the Emergency Department with a chief complaint of chest pain is to complete an EKG and have it read by an ED Physician within 10 minutes of arrival. Prior to the process change, the Emergency Department was achieving this goal of 47 % of the time. With the change in our process we have maintained performance at the 50th percentile with multiple weeks above the 90th percentile nationally for completing the EKG and having it read by a physician within 10 minutes.

Implementation Strategies

In determining how to achieve the goal of completing EKGs on patients presenting with chest pain and interpreted by an ED Physician within 10 minutes of arrival, we held a department meeting with Nurses, Paramedics and Patient Care Technicians. The purpose of the meeting was to determine what was causing the breakdown in the process and what we could implement to improve the results. The staff in the department said that they could meet the goal if we stopped the direct bedding process. Direct bedding is where a patient that presents to the Emergency Department is immediately placed in a treatment room before the triage is completed. This process bypassed the EKG room that was designated in Triage. Current evidence-based practice shows that door to treatment improves with the direct bedding process. Despite the current literature, the staff felt that changing the process to all EKGs being completed in Triage before the patient was placed in a room would increase efficiency and help us achieve the goal.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness

The data with achieving this goal was emailed and posted in the staff breakroom weekly for ongoing, real-time feedback on performance. Any prolonged timeframes were reviewed with ED Leadership and the staff member involved to look for opportunities for improvement. This also reinforced the expectations of achieving the EKGs within 10 minutes.



Implications for Nursing Practice

Through this process, it showcased the value of having front-line staff involved in the operational challenges in the Emergency Department. Despite going against the grain of evidence-based literature, there is an improvement in getting EKGs completed within the 10-minute timeframe.

References:

Marino, P., Mays, A., Thompson, E. (2015). Bypass rapid assessment triage: How culture change improved one Emergency Department's safety, throughput and patient satisfaction. *Journal of Emergency Nursing*. 41, 3, 213, 220.