Improving Anatomic Pathology Operations at MGH

Host:

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Project Overview

Anatomic Pathology Process

- Pathologists make diagnoses based on tissue appearance under a microscope.
- Specimens removed from patient by surgeons and accessioned.
- Specimens fixed in formaldehyde, then placed into cassettes.
- Cassettes processed, embedded, cut into slides, stained, blocked and sealed.

Slides delivered to pathologists for initial review.

Goal: Cut down on the time residents must wait for slides

- Stated issue: Late slide delivery due to operational inefficiencies is risking residents to delay diagnoses.
- The goal is to cut down on the time residents must wait for slides to be delivered by 60%.

Our Focus

1. Prioritize resident services

Recommendation:

- Use cassette color to denote non-resident services and inform histologists to process last.

Finding:

- 1. Confuse de-prioritization with non-resident services.
- 2. Improved line color coding for non-resident.
- 3. Use all hands meeting and pager print services to communicate to PA, accessioning.

2. Assign specimen to service, not resident in accessioning

Recommendation:

- 1. Choose one service to submit.
- 2. Select appropriate metrics to track progress.
- 3. Experiment with how to handle incoming calls.

Finding:

- 1. Supervising PA-prioritizes cases.

4. Create incentive program to reward excellence

Recommendation:

- Pilot a "CHARGE" incentive program to reward excellence.

Finding:

- Pilot's success.

5. Implement continuous improvement

Recommendation:

- Pilot "innovation task-force competition" to identify inefficiencies and easy wins.

Other recommendations

- Consider entering value in improvements operations: dive deeper into out of scope observations.
- Small wins to improve TAT:
  - 1. Ensure residents are blocked.
  - 2. Consolidate accessioning into two processes.
  - 3. Eliminate print ready workflow from slides delivered.
  - 4. Increase time stamp on mouse to simplify batch processing.
  - 5. Develop standard training for accessioners.

Out of Scope:

- Tailor and better informed clinicians providing to residents schedule.
- Match 1st and 2nd year residents in frozen section.
- Streamline software to consider the workflow.
- Assign administrative assistant to collect with cases.