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RHEUMATOLOGIST CARE IS ASSOCIATED WITH FEWER EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS BY PERSONS WITH ACUTE GOUT

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Background: Gout is one of the most common inflammatory arthropathies. By searching a large administrative data base (Symphony Integrated Dataverse), we found that persons with acute gout see a rheumatologist infrequently, whereas less than 50% of advanced gout patients are seen by a rheumatologist. Notably, however, gout patients seen by rheumatologists have more frequent urate measurements and are prescribed urate lowering therapy more frequently. This study sought to determine whether involvement of a rheumatologist in gout care had a positive impact on health outcomes

Objectives: To determine whether involvement of a rheumatologist had a positive impact on health outcomes of patients with gout.

Methods: We carried out a retrospective analysis to identify persons with gout over an approximately 3-year period from October 2015 to December 2018. This study used data from the Truven MarketScan® database, an administrative database covering over 190 million patients across the United States and based on fully adjudicated and paid insurance claims. Patients were identified as having gout if they were >18 years of age and had at least two medical claims for the diagnosis of gout on different days, separated by at least 3 months. Patients with acute gout were identified by ICD-10 code M10.1, chronic non-urate gout (M1A.***), tophaceous gout (M1A.***1) and uncontrolled gout (M10.0, M1A.1), the latter manifested by three gout codes (any) in the primary diagnosis position and three urate measurements within the same calendar year. Particular attention was placed on Emergency Room (ER) visits by individuals in each category and by individuals who had been evaluated by a rheumatologist.

Results: We identified 284,877 gout patients. The median age was 59.2 years and 79.0% were male. Of the 230,998 persons coded as acute gout, 10.7% were seen by a rheumatologist, whereas 26.9% of the 32,942 coded as chronic non-urate gout, 47.2% of the 7,723 coded as tophaceous gout and 43.6% of the 13,514 coded as uncontrolled gout were seen by a rheumatologist. In each gout category, the frequency of ER visits was significantly reduced in persons who had been seen by a rheumatologist (Table 1). In acute gout, the frequencies of ER visits in those with and without rheumatologist care were 5.6% vs 6.6% (p<0.001), respectively. In chronic non-urate gout it was 5.5% vs 6.7% (p=0.001); in tophaceous gout it was 10.3% vs 14.7% (p<0.001); and in uncontrolled gout it was 12.8% vs 19.0%, respectively. If the frequencies of rheumatologist-associated gout patient ER visits were applied to all gout subjects, there would have been 3,088 less ER visits in this cohort of gout patients.

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TRACKING THE EFFECTS ON A CLINICAL SERVICE OF INTRODUCING ULTRASOUND FOR DIAGNOSIS OF GIANT CELL ARTERITIS: DESIGN OF A SERVICE EVALUATION USING LEAN METHODOLOGY

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Background: In our large, multi-site hospital, patients with suspected GCA are started promptly on high-dose prednisolone but until 2019, patients waited for temporal artery biopsy (TAB) until the GCA diagnosis could be confirmed (“GCA”) or refuted (“not-GCA”). Reports of the impact of introducing temporal and axillary artery ultrasound (TAUS) have mainly come from smaller hospitals. Agreement between TAUS and TAB has been reported by others with a Cohen’s kappa of 0.35 [1] and 0.40 [2]. We used Lean methodology to identify metrics across 5 key domains: delivery, quality, service, morale and cost.

Objectives: To design metrics for a service evaluation to measure impact of introducing TAUS, and to test their feasibility of measurement within routine care.

Methods: Our primary driver was time from presenting to our service to diagnostic confirmation (lead time). Pathway mapping, value stream mapping and a driver diagram identified key ideas for improvement.

We chose to measure: Delivery (mean lead time for each month), Quality (proportion of patients with GCA and positive TAB/TAUS; total (cumulative) prednisolone dose in patients with not-GCA, Service (patient feedback), Morale (staff feedback) and Cost (number of patients; cost of tests per patient; overall costs). We plotted these by month on run charts and defined a significant shift as 6 consecutive monthly values below baseline median. Cohen’s kappa was calculated using GraphPad QuickCalc.

Results: Routine TAUS for suspected GCA was introduced from January 2019, alongside a multidisciplinary team monthly meeting. TAUS was done a median