

Clinical Audit Template

Title

Compliance with Recommended Follow-up for Incidental Pulmonary Nodules Found on CT Chest Studies

Authors

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Background/Aim

Up to 51% of smokers aged 50 years or older have incidental pulmonary nodules on CT chest studies. Although many of these incidental nodules are benign, follow-up of these nodules is widely recommended, most commonly using the guidelines published by the Fleischner Society, especially with nodules greater than 6 mm in size and in higher risk populations such as smokers. In a study from 2013, 51% of patient discharge instructions failed to note follow-up imaging recommendations on studies performed in the emergency department. The aim of this audit project is to determine if follow-up studies are being performed for incidental pulmonary nodules as recommended on CT chest studies.

Standard

No published standard is available. Follow-up studies for incidental pulmonary nodules should reasonably be performed within +/- 1 month as recommended on the initial CT chest study as per the Fleischner Society guidelines.

Target

The standard should be performed in 100% of the cases.

Methods

Review CT chest studies of patients with incidental pulmonary nodules for which the radiologist has recommended a follow-up study. Review the patient's follow-up imaging record to determine whether a follow-up study has been performed.

Action Plan

If the target is not achieved, radiologists should be requested to insert a large font bold paragraph at the start of the impression portion of their report that highlights the need for action/follow-up. A re-audit should be performed after 1-2 years to determine whether the intervention has been successful. Results should be shared with radiologists and referring clinicians after the second cycle of data has been collected.

References

- Dutta S, Long WJ, Brown DF, et al. Automated detection using natural language processing of radiologists recommendations for additional imaging of incidental findings. *Ann Emerg Med.* 2013;62(2):162-9.
- MacMahon H, Austin JHM, Gamsu G, et al. Guidelines for management of small pulmonary nodules detected on CT scans: a statement from the Fleischner Society. *Radiol.* 2005;237(2):395-400.
- MacMahon H, Naidich DP, Goo JM, et al. Guidelines for management of incidental pulmonary nodules detected on CT Images: from the Fleischner Society 2017. *Radiol.* 2017 Feb 23:161659. doi: 10.1148/radiol.2017161659.