How do I deal with missing data?

EHR is just a system in which communication occurs. Missing or inaccurate data in the EHR is a manifestation of a breakdown in that communication. The EHR is not really responsible for the delivery of care and alone cannot check vitals, draw blood, or coordinate a radiology study. It is the people who interact with the EHR that move care forward and, it is oftentimes those people that have the answers when data is missing. Therefore, if the information in the EHR is incomplete or inaccurate, the quickest way to reconcile likely involves communicating with the right person.

Sleuthing for missing or inaccurate data in the EHR is about identifying the right person to talk to, rather than looking elsewhere in the EHR for hints or clues. To do this, review the flow for the process and the people involved in that process. Remember that disruptions can happen at any point of the process. Many of these disruptions in the process may not be captured in the EHR, requiring you to talk to one of the individuals involved in the workflow to get more information. Thus, you will have to go beyond the EHR to investigate how and why things go wrong.

Note: There are many varied workflows in different EHRs and are often institution specific. This makes it extra-important to get to know your hospital so you can troubleshoot your institution’s specific workflows.

Tips

- Use search functionality, like chart search, with keywords to try to see if you can find where the gap lies in your process.
- Ensure good data stewardship by checking data that seems incorrect and verify it with the patient or the care team.
- Find out who maybe involved in the process where the gap lies and ask them for additional information.