Clinical Decision Support (CDS) and Diagnostic Imaging

Adopt Tools to Promote Shared Decision-Making and Ensure Appropriate Care Delivery

AMA IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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How will this module help me?

1. Discusses the benefits of incorporating Clinical Decision Support tools into your practice workflow.
2. Provides guidance on using Clinical Decision Support tools.
3. Links to resources to help you meet the changing regulatory requirements.
Introduction

Starting Jan. 1, 2020, the Protecting Access to Medicare Act (PAMA) requires referring providers to consult appropriate use criteria (AUC) prior to ordering advanced diagnostic imaging services (ADIS)—CT, MR, Nuclear Medicine and PET—for Medicare patients. We are in the process of updating this STEPS Forward™ module to provide you with the most current information on meeting those requirements and using Clinical Decision Support tools in your practice. If you would like to be notified when the new module is released, please email us at stepsforward@ama-assn.org.

Until the updated module is available, we are providing you with the following information to help you integrate Clinical Decision Support tools into practice now, in advance of the regulatory change.

Clinical decision support systems provide the technology to enhance decision-making at the point of care by providing physicians and other care team members with relevant and organized clinical knowledge and patient information. This health information technology encompasses a variety of tools to enhance decision-making in the clinical workflow, including computerized alerts and reminders to care providers and patients, clinical guidelines, condition-specific order sets, focused patient data reports and summaries, documentation templates, diagnostic support, and contextually relevant reference information.  

Clinical Decision Support has a number of important benefits, including:

- Increased quality of care and enhanced health outcomes
- Avoidance of errors and adverse events
- Improved efficiency
- Patient and practitioner satisfaction

Four STEPS to Clinical Decision Support Integration

2. Prepare Your Practice to Adopt Clinical Decision Support Tools.
3. Work with Your Electronic Medical Record (EMR) Support Team to Integrate Clinical Decision Support Technology.
4. Discuss Imaging Appropriateness with Your Patients.

Discover the Benefits of Clinical Decision Support Tools.

Clinical Decision Support tools include a variety of technologies—such as computerized alerts, condition-specific order sets, documentation templates, and diagnostic support—and provide tools to help physicians act upon established clinical guidelines and make timely and informed decisions. Clinical decision support that is integrated at the point of physician decision-making is defined as “providing clinicians or patients with computer-generated, clinical knowledge and patient-related information, intelligently filtered or presented at appropriate times, to enhance patient care.”

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With clinical decision support tools in the exam room, physicians and other members of the care team can engage with patients in shared-decision making by discussing information on the benefits and risks associated with various tests, including cost or radiation exposure. It also gives the physician the opportunity to explain the rationale for ordering, delaying, or not performing a test. This technology can also help you gather data to assist in providing patient-centered-care at a lower cost—two key metrics of value-based payment models.

Continued improvement in health care technology is one of the powerful levers necessary for significant transformation in health care. Health information technologies designed to improve clinical decision making are particularly attractive for their ability to address the growing information overload clinicians face, and to provide a platform for integrating evidence-based knowledge into care delivery. The majority of Clinical Decision Support applications operate as components of comprehensive electronic medical records (EMRs), although stand-alone systems are also used.4

Benefits to You and Your Practice.
Clinical Decision Support tools enable you to reduce variations in clinical practice and identify gaps in care to improve patient outcomes. An established standard of care using evidence-based best practices helps clinicians routinely evaluate and benchmark performance against those standards using EMR-based and targeted analytics delivered by their Clinical Decision Support tool. As a result, organizations can locate key opportunities for outcome improvements and regularly track improvement efforts.

Supports Patient-Centered Care.
Clinical Decision Support tools complement patient-centered care delivery models in several ways:

- Expanding capacity for quality improvement initiatives.
- Achieving the common goals of improved care, better health, and improved costs for their patient and practices.
- Bringing physicians and their patients together in shared decision-making to reduce unnecessary tests and procedures.

Prepare Your Practice to Adopt Clinical Decision Support Tools.

In 2018, CMS passed regulations under the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014 (PAMA) that requires health care practitioners to consult a qualified Clinical Decision Support Mechanism (CDSM) and to collect Appropriate Use Criteria (AUC) for Advanced Diagnostic Imaging. While 2019 is a voluntary year, this requirement is mandatory as of January 1, 2020.5

Leaders should carefully plan the rollout of any new Clinical Decision Support functionality. For Clinical Decision Support tools to be effective, clinicians must be motivated to use these systems. Even when efforts are made to engage clinicians and integrate Clinical Decision Support into the workflow, the use of these tools may exacerbate the increasingly time-pressured patient care process.

Workflow Evaluation.
Assessment of the workflow and how a Clinical Decision Support tool will fit in should be done as the beginning of this process. Once the workflow is analyzed, it will be possible to make decisions on how to improve processes and how Clinical Decision Support can support improvement. Including your organization’s IT team or EMR representatives is important—it allows them to gain an understanding of the workflow of the entire practice and not one singular clinician representative.

Work with Your Electronic Medical Record (EMR) Support Team to Integrate Clinical Decision Support Technology.

To achieve good outcomes with your clinical decision support tool, it is necessary to ensure that it fits in with your existing technology. For clinicians, fit involves usability and usefulness, and is often measured by productivity and accuracy in completing the required tasks. At the practice or clinic level, fit can involve integration with other clinic-wide applications, organizational culture, management structure, and reward systems.
Discuss Imaging Appropriateness with Your Patients.

Fifty-three percent of clinicians say that even if they know a medical test is unnecessary, they order it if a patient insists, and 70% say that after they speak with a patient about why a test or procedure is unnecessary, the patient often avoids it. To discuss image appropriateness with patients, the American College of Radiology developed a video for the Choosing Wisely initiative that covers how to convey clear information, elicit patient concerns, listen with empathy, and confirm agreement with the patient. Another valuable resource for physicians has been created by the Radiologic Society of North America, which offers videos and presentations by radiologists and medical physicists on nearly 200 imaging procedures, exams and medical conditions. The website covers diagnostic and interventional radiology, nuclear medicine, radiation therapy, and radiation safety.

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To find out more about the changing regulations, you can visit these resources:

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: Appropriate Use Criteria (AUC) for Diagnostic Imaging Services: Consultation of Specified Applicable AUC through a Qualified Clinical Decision Support Mechanism

American College of Radiology: Clinical Decision Support

Learning Objectives
1. Define clinical decision support and describe its role in optimizing patient care delivery
2. Explain how to select an imaging area to improve and list steps to prepare your practice to adopt CDS tools
3. Identify tools and resources your practice can utilize to discuss imaging appropriateness with patients
4. Discuss the importance of integrating CDS technology with your practice’s EHR system

Article Information

Disclaimer: The project described was supported by Funding Opportunity Number CMS-1L1-15-002 from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. The contents provided are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of HHS or any of its agencies.

Additional Information: About the AMA Professional Satisfaction and Practice Sustainability Group: The AMA Professional Satisfaction and Practice Sustainability group has been tasked with developing and promoting innovative strategies that create sustainable practices. Leveraging findings from the 2013 AMA/RAND Health study, “Factors affecting physician professional satisfaction and their implications for patient care, health systems and health policy,” and other research sources, the group developed a series of practice transformation strategies. Each has the potential to reduce or eliminate inefficiency in broader office-based physician practices and improve health outcomes, increase operational productivity and reduce health care costs.
References