Title: After Hours Triage: Who are your patients talking to?
Subtitle: Implementing a nurse driven after-hours call center

Institution: The James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Columbus, Ohio.

Problem Statement: Reason for Action

- Calls from James cancer patients during non-business hours are being managed in a variety of ways.
- Some calls are being managed by an outside vendor which is not a health care call center. Call center agents take a message but do not have skills or knowledge to manage the call/request.
- The outside vendor has instructions on what information to obtain and how to escalate the call, however instructions are very basic, cannot be designed to manage patient care calls. Instructions are sometimes not followed and clinical call may not be managed timely.
- When calls are escalated to a care provider, there is a delay between when a call is taken by the outside vendor and when a health care provider calls the patient or caregiver back to gather more information and manage the situation.
- Some calls need immediate attention based on the symptoms that patients are reporting.

Current State: After-Hours Phone Calls

- Four different options are used to manage after-hours phone calls
- Patients never have the opportunity to speak directly with a care provider, thus first call resolution is not possible
- No established timeline to call patient back

Special thanks to the interprofessional team who helped with this process improvement project and the support of the CNO and other members of senior administration.

Baseline Data

- Average call volume per day = 28 calls
- Highest call volume occurs on Saturday
- Peak time periods for calls: 4 p.m. - 9 p.m. 6 a.m. - 8 a.m.

Process Improvement Method

Process improvement approach used to design new nurse driven triage department and implementation timeline.

Key Accomplishments

- Development of:
  - Telephone Triage Nurse Position Description
  - Orientation materials and SharePoint site for staff resources
  - Peer review tool
  - Organizational communication materials
  - Caller satisfaction tool
  - Implementation of EMR telephone triage module using evidenced based decision making tools
  - Review of 240 evidenced based telephone triage protocols
  - Creation of key performance metrics to measure success

Future State: After-Hours Phone Calls

In a phased approach, implement a nurse driven after-hours telephone triage center that uses evidence based protocols to assure comprehensive assessment, provision of consistent care advice and determines disposition of patient.