

A Practice Makes Perfect

Health Professionals Put Quality Models to Work for Better Patient Care

The Practice Transformation Initiative, one of three pillars of the AIAG Health Care Steering Committee mission, takes quality management tools like ISO and BOS, and puts them to work in healthcare. AIAG's 2007 collaboration with the Michigan Medical Group Management Association (MMGMA) saw five pilot projects, each focused on improving an aspect of healthcare:

- **The Milford Family Practice:** Test result turn-around time
- **Lansing Ophthalmology:** Patient flow
- **Hastings Eye and ENT:** No-show appointments
- **Ann Arbor/West Arbor OB/GYN:** Referral handling and turn-around
- **Kalamazoo Gastroenterology & Digestive Health:** Patient record flow

Dave Lalain, AIAG's Director of Life Sciences, asserts, "The AIAG/MMGMA collaboration continues with more projects and applications beyond disease management."

In Good Company

AIAG isn't alone in the effort to bring quality and value reform to healthcare delivery. Throughout Michigan, a grass roots movement to tame the American healthcare beast is happening on the front line with doctors, nurses and administrators.

In 2006, The Calhoun County Pathway to Health (CCPH) began an initiative to improve how practices serve patients. The organization has spent the past two years studying and implementing tools for greater success in chronic care.

Dr. Mary Ellen Benzik, Medical Director for the Physician Hospital Organization, recalls how the learning collaborative began. "We knew we had to change how physician practices work but, practices can't just stop operating," she admits. "We knew this improvement initiative would be a challenge."

DayOne Makes the Commitment

DayOne Healthcare of Battle Creek, Mich., one of ten area practices participating in the CCPH effort, created a team to be trained on the Wagner Chronic Care Model. Developed by the McColl Group, the model looks at factors needed to achieve successful chronic care, such as a computerized information systems and self-management support. McColl research shows that only 20-30% of patients suffering from diseases such as diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure, get the care they really need.

Putting the Model to Work

After training, DayOne identified 100 diabetic patients and implemented the Chronic Care model's guidelines for patient outreach, self-management, goal-setting and comprehensive office visits, where all factors of a patient's health are considered in relation to their diabetes. In addition to follow-up calls on lab results and appointment reminders, the time-consuming process of data tracking and reporting began.

"When we took a proactive approach to managing planned visits, we started to offer *total* managed care," says Dr. Ptacin. "The most significant area of improvement has been the self-management goals, allowing patients to see and discuss expectations issued by the American Diabetic Association and make choices to improve their health."

The DayOne Team



Front, L to R: Jamie Thomet, Front Office Supervisor; Heather Gigowski, Medical Asst.; Andrea David, Medical Asst.; Back Row: Sheryl Tuck, Office Manager; Dr. Phil Ptacin; Andrea Cook, Clinical Supervisor and Team Leader

The Results

Over a year later, the DayOne team has results worth celebrating. As Team Leader, Andrea Cook's role was to coordinate team meetings, report data and offer motivational support. "When we started to see the results on paper, we all felt the thrill of success," says Cook.

In June 2007, 24 percent of the study group had LDL levels (low-density lipoprotein), less than 100. By April, 2008 that number more than doubled to 56 percent. At the project's onset, 43 percent reported optimum glycohemoglobin levels – today, that number is 77 percent.

"This team is excited about what's happening," says Office Manager Sheryl Tuck. "Patients are happier and we're giving better care." Medical Assistant, Heather Gigowski agrees and is amazed at patient feedback: "They're speechless. They can't believe how involved we are in their care."

Only the Beginning

DayOne is committed to expanding the plan for all chronic care patients and has begun peer training. "We're sharing what we've learned with the rest of our physicians and staff," says Dr. Ptacin, "so we can bring this to the whole practice." Is there fear of going back to the old ways? "I can't imagine not using the visit guidelines and the patient motivation model – because it works!" says Ptacin. "We would never go back."