

Family Practice Renewal Program: Good News Stories

BUILDING BRIDGES TO CLOSE THE GAPS

In November 2023 the MyQ Program launched the Navigating Care Coordination Series (NCC) sponsored by the Family Practice Renewal Program (FPRP). This Series provided family physicians with an opportunity to partner with a physician consultant or specialty program of their choosing to improve care coordination for a shared patient population. The series was developed and implemented in NL to address the known challenges associated with the referral process.

Participants encompassed rural and urban, fee-for-service and salaried, group and solo practitioners as well as interdisciplinary team members within provincial specialty programs. Through the support of Family Practice Networks, FPRP identified 27 physicians interested in improving referral processes. Matching the interests of family physicians and referral consultants resulted in 4 teams registering to participate and 2 teams completing a six month long enriched, cross-discipline group learning experience focused on testing new approaches in care coordination.

Principles of Care Coordination

Participants came together over 4 sessions and 3 PDSA calls to address issues around access to referral consultants, unclear referral criteria, variable quality of information exchange, inconsistent patient education, and unclear shared care management of patient post-referral. MyQ advisors and practice facilitators guided teams in developing a Care Coordination Agreement (CCA) to assist primary care physicians, physician consultants and specialty programs in documenting their decisions, criteria, and processes as a resource for shared quality improvement. The teams successfully developed CCAs covering the topics of: heart failure, general cardiology, iron deficiency anemia, and rectal bleeding. Significant improvements were made in the areas of information exchange (referral criteria, confirmation of referral, and consultation reports), initial patient management, and assessing urgency of referral.

Building Strong Relationships

The NCC Series engaged and matched primary care physicians interested in care coordination with relevant physician consultants and/or RHA programs to create quality improvement partnerships. All parties agreed that these partnerships fostered a shared mental model for care coordination work, provided an opportunity to gain an understanding of each other's perspectives, strengthened existing relationships and forged new ones between participants.

"It was very helpful to understand the family physician perspective relating to the challenges of care coordination."

- Physician consultant

Sustaining Improvements

Moving forward the referral partners will continue to test the changes contained within their respective CCAs. Teams have agreed to utilize a continuous quality improvement approach to monitor their agreements for success, communicate any issues or updates and meet at intervals as a group to revisit their CCAs. They are committed to building on the work they did during the NCC Series and plan to share their experience and CCAs with others as they progress along their care coordination improvement journey.

"This program laid the foundation for a long-term commitment to improve care coordination that will benefit our teams and our patients."

- Family physician