

GLPTN Spotlight: Northwestern Medical Group

Making Great Strides in Influenza Immunization Compliance

Northwestern Medical Group (NMG) joined Great Lakes Practice Transformation Network (GLPTN) to support quality improvement efforts at its 19 primary care practices. Banu Yagci, MBA, is the Clinical Quality Leader at Northwestern Medical Group and also serves as the NMG's Quality Improvement Advisor for GLPTN. One process measure NMG has focused on is utilization of clinical decision support (CDS) for influenza immunizations. At baseline, physician use of CDS – called Best Practice Advisories (BPAs) in the EPIC electronic health record system at NMG – for tracking flu vaccine uptake was 12 percent. NMG baseline performance for influenza vaccination is 29.3 percent.

Before instating any updates, Banu and her team identified areas of improvement for the influenza quality measure. Initially, the BPA was presented only to physicians and did not have the flexibility to account for vaccinations received elsewhere during the influenza season. This was problematic for three reasons. First, patients are increasingly receiving flu shots at their places of employment or retail pharmacies instead of in the traditional medical setting; free-text documentation in progress notes of previous immunization receipt was a key driver of lower compliance. Second, the BPA for physicians is passive, meaning it does not stop workflow and is optional to complete. Finally, a large portion of NMG physicians are new to the concept of CDS.

In order to address these challenges, Banu partnered with medical and operational leadership. Together they planned to enhance physician BPA to allow for one-click capture of external influenza vaccinations. Additionally, it was decided the influenza immunization workflow could be owned by the entire care team. Therefore, a separate pop-up BPA for allied healthcare professionals was created and incorporated into clinical workflow to better document outside immunization information. The team-based approach for influenza vaccination was piloted during the 2016-17 influenza season and disseminated across all NMG primary care practices at the beginning of the 2017-18 influenza season.

The NMG Quality Team worked with operational leadership to provide education to the entire care team on the new BPA approach. Multiple meetings and live demos with MAs, as well as hands-on training and easy-to-reference tip sheets all contributed to a strong launch of the new workflow. "I wanted to make sure all MAs were really educated on this," says Banu. For many, it was the first time they had used CDS and had been engaged in decision-making conversations with patients. MAs were empowered to own their part of the process and to lead patients to speak with their physicians if they had any additional concerns. "Having an impact on one of our messages was a good motivator for MAs," shares Banu.

The analytics team built two reports to track the impact of enhanced CDS for providers, the new CDS for allied healthcare professionals and the team-based approach. A "CDS Uptake Report" was created to monitor utilization for each healthcare team role and a real-time influenza immunization compliance report was created to monitor bi-weekly and cumulative compliance. The compliance report is shared weekly with practice leadership throughout the influenza season.

Prior to the pilot program, influenza BPA utilization by physicians at the pilot practice was 11 percent. In the five months after the pilot launch, medical assistants (MA) reached a utilization rate of 55 percent and physician utilization increased to 17 percent. Influenza immunization compliance at the pilot

practice increased by almost 23 percent from 44.5 percent to 67.12 percent. Seven more practices joined the pilot and NMG overall compliance for influenza vaccination increased to 60.2 percent at the end of the 2017 fiscal year.

Because of the success of the pilot program, the MA Flu BPA was implemented in all NMG primary care practices was extended to registered nurses and licensed practical nurses at the beginning of the 2017-18 influenza season. Since then, MAs have reached a utilization rate of 71 percent and physician utilization has increased to 21 percent. Right now, NMG overall compliance for influenza vaccination is 80.5 percent. Implementing the new BPA and workflow proved to have immediate positive effects. Banu and her team are very pleased with the results and plan on continuing to provide education and support for the process, as well as monitoring outcomes and adjusting as necessary.