

## GLPTN Spotlight: North Shore Cardiology Consultants and Vein Centre

*"It's just good practice to focus on quality improvement."*

In an office where everyone is spread thin, standardizing quality improvement strategies and procedures can seem daunting. That's exactly how Kelly Dietrich, Practice Administrator, felt when North Shore Cardiology Consultants and Vein Centre began working with the Great Lakes Practice Transformation Network (GLPTN). Kelly and the rest of the practice – 13 other staff and three physicians – focus on providing excellent care. Documentation, on the other hand, was a constant source of inconvenience. Independently owned, North Shore Cardiology "just doesn't have the resources to do it all," and they welcomed partnering with GLPTN for assistance on meeting their goals.

When Kelly sat down with Dr. John Bello, retired ophthalmologist and current GLPTN Quality Improvement Advisor (QIA), and Teresa Pollack, former GLPTN QIA, she took the large step of beginning to standardize the policies already in place. Kelly explains, "Between Dr. Bello explaining GLPTN and Teresa coming in to work with me, we had a wonderful partnership."

At the beginning, Teresa shared a resources binder with Kelly and offered assistance with transferring activities into measurable goals that would qualify the practice for the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) and satisfy GLPTN guidelines. North Shore Cardiology already had successfully completed the Medicare Meaningful Use program and therefore was well poised to transition to MIPS.



*The team is hard at work. From left to right are pictured Diana Dospod, Billing Supervisor; Kelly Dietrich, Practice Administrator; Sabrina Buzzo, Clinical Supervisor; and Tina Rattinger, Reception Supervisor*

As part of the practice facilitation, Teresa worked with Kelly to complete Practice Assessment Tools (PATs) that helped keep track of progress. Kelly and her team were able to fulfil numerous PAT items by standardizing what the practice already was achieving. For one, North Shore Cardiology met milestone #11, which focuses on the use of evidence-based protocols, by formalizing their procedure for administering amiodarone, the anti-arrhythmic drug.

Another aspect of clinical practice they examined was patient and family engagement (PAT milestones #4 and #5). A patient portal was available, but many patients preferred to call the office instead of communicating via computer. Kelly and her team took a new approach to increasing portal use by involving patient families, children, and grandchildren. They created a policy, complete with step-by-step portal instructions and screen shots,

that helped staff effectively collaborate with families. After the policy was implemented, patient portal use grew exponentially.

Increasing joy in practice (PAT #19) was also addressed. In order to assess staff and physician satisfaction, Kelly administered a survey that asked about experiences at work. The completely anonymous questionnaire allowed respondents to be “brutally honest,” which helped staff feel their concerns had been heard. “We definitely made changes based on responses,” says Kelly.

Quantifying these activities and others already in motion led to the creation of a policy and procedures manual that encompasses everything related to patient care and office administration. Kelly enlisted everyone’s help, from staff in billing, reception, administration, and care delivery to make sure the manual was both comprehensive and useful for all.

“Had Teresa not sat down with me to go over scores, etc., I may never have been motivated to document our policies,” says Kelly. At the beginning, Kelly was planning on using a 2” binder to store the newly compiled manual. After combing through all the activities, Kelly ended up filling two 5” binders with materials. “It took two to three months to organize all the documents electronically and on paper,” said Kelly.

Moving forward, the manual will continue to evolve. Kelly and her team will update the binders whenever there’s a change and will make sure everyone has the latest version at their fingertips. More importantly, North Shore Cardiology Consultants and Vein Centre will continue using the policies to guide their daily activities. “It’s not only for MIPS,” Kelly says, “It’s just good practice to focus on quality improvement.”