

GLPTN Spotlight: Advanced Primary Health Care

Consistently meeting QI goals



Demonstrating a joy-in-work milestone, from left to right: Majad Ali, MD, Marisol Santiago, Mayra Abarca, MA, Mercedes Ramos, Michele Rutishauser – Office Manager, and Noreen Pierandozzi, NP, in the middle front.

Advanced Primary Health Care of Aurora, Illinois, had an electronic health record (EHR) system for some time when they joined the Great Lakes Practice Transformation Network (GLPTN). The independent small practice knew about Meaningful Use and quality improvement (QI) programs but didn't have time to decipher the process of participating in them. That's where Kerri Lanum, GLPTN Quality Improvement Advisor, Northern Illinois University, came in.

With a background in clinical informatics and practice management, Kerri was perfectly positioned to help Advanced Primary Health Care meet their goals of improving performance as related to MU and QI. The practice was already providing excellent patient care; improving performance was a matter of changing office workflows and standardizing documentation in the EHR.

Kerri worked very closely with all members of the practice, starting with office manager Michele Rutishauser. Kerri educated her on the programs and workflows needed to satisfy quality measures. Together, they taught the rest of the practice about the changes that were to be implemented in order to improve patient care, increase patient engagement, and receive financial incentives from payers. The team has also applied Lean Principles to evaluate workflow in order to streamline routines and eliminate unnecessary steps. "This stuff takes a while. It's not automatic," explained Kerri.

Participating in GLPTN helped Advanced Primary Health Care meet the requirements for The Physician Quality Reporting System (PQRS) and Meaningful Use. The practice was able to participate in both programs for 2016 and are on track to meet the requirements for the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) (formerly PQRS) and MU for 2017. As a two-provider practice with limited staff, Advanced Primary Health Care uses the well-earned incentive dollars to invest back into the practice.

Since summer 2015, Kerri has been the practice's "accountability partner," checking in and keeping the group on track. They have weekly check-in calls that have made a big difference. Kerri said, "The activities are not difficult, but we have to stay on them in order to be successful."

The practice has really prioritized maintaining the new workflows and participating in MIPS and MU. Performance data is shared weekly during team huddles and with providers so everyone is aware of QI status. Emphasizing the importance of documenting quality measures at every patient encounter regardless of visit type also has helped ensure goals are met.

Talking through all these processes has improved communication throughout the practice and helped staff and providers avoid assumptions about how things were being done. Lunches, employee get-togethers, and weekly meetings all have helped reinvigorate joy in practice. The team is now more aware of each other's responsibilities and how they work best together. Kerri explains, "Improved communications make it easier to fit the QI initiatives into everything they do."



The close attention paid to QI efforts resulting from GLPTN participation has helped the practice become more aware of the quality of care they are providing to their patients. A patient survey was instated, garnering positive feedback and reinforcing that patients appreciated efforts made by the practice.

Committed to building on their successes, Advanced Primary Health Care providers consistently meet QI goals and are looking to continue innovating in the future. Kerri says, "They're working really hard. Challenges pop up and staff use their limited time to fix issues in between regular workflows."

Dr. Majad Ali (left) and Noreen Pierandozzi, NP