

Carle Health System Improved Hypertension Rates with Population Health

Developing a culture of quality control using data & incentives were key to success

INITIAL SITUATION

What started as a limited project in one part of the expansive Carle Health System (Carle) in Illinois, soon turned into a comprehensive initiative due to the near immediate success. The initial idea came from Dr. Robert Good, who gleaned from Carle's data that their percentage of patients with controlled hypertension hovered around 50%. Additionally, many of these patients were only seeing specialty physicians and not primary care physicians who would typically document and track blood pressures with more due diligence.

Dr. Good's approach was based in population health and emphasized to staff that, "population health is not about the people we see, it's about the people we don't see." With that in mind, a patient-centered medical home in the Carle System set out to improve hypertensive care.

CHALLENGE

The team went to work on improving processes, compliance and worked closely with Caravan to glean information from their data. Cultivating a new culture requires change and oftentimes change is met with resistance. The goal to

develop a culture of quality control was set and to help overcome anticipated resistance, incentives were offered to physicians who participated in the program and met targeted goals.

New workflows were implemented and while the learning curve was not necessarily steep, it took time for the program to gain momentum. Staff were trained and educated as to why shifting their standard procedures would be beneficial. Daily huddles were scheduled and each day the goal was to ensure that no patient with an elevated blood pressure left the office without a treatment and follow-up plan. While initially it appeared as though more work was added to the schedule, and some patients resisted returning to the office sooner than expected, it became clear that the extra efforts were paying off.

SOLUTION

The rates of controlled hypertensive patients, once hovering in the 50% range increased to 72%. The staff began to note the improvement in their patients who had begun making comments about feeling better and having higher quality of lives. Due to the success of the program, the focus on controlling hypertensive patients spread

throughout the Carle Health System. Staff and providers have embraced the initiative and as a positive side effect, local pharmacists have also gotten more involved with their patients as they have seen the improvements. Many have noted that patients have shared stories of healthier eating habits, their increased ability to exercise and enjoy it, and some have also quit smoking.

“There are very few things we do as physicians that have as much impact on human health as treating blood pressure.”

ROBERT GOOD, DO

Chief Medical Officer
Carle Population Health
& Medical Management

