

Our Success with the Care Team Huddle and Office Communication

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As national primary care medical home demonstration projects have completed their post-implementation evaluation period, they have successfully achieved medical home milestones and standards. Demonstration project methodologies and achievements have been celebrated and shared so that other healthcare providers and practices could begin the process of transitioning to a medical home. Despite successes within these demonstration projects, one common thread has become apparent; the need to strengthen communication between and among providers, staff, and patients was a significant element that had not fully been addressed or achieved, and one which seriously affected the overall success of the medical home. So, how does a busy pediatric practice address this issue?

At Ronald Jones Pediatrics, we began the process of building a quality improvement team and medical home practice. We were keenly aware of the communication shortcomings in these early demonstration projects. We found that in our hectic practice, as in most practices, our daily communications were often sporadic and fragmented, leading to ineffective, inefficient workflow and patient care. To begin to address this issue, we met and discussed the results of two medical home practice evaluations, the EQUIPP Medical Home Practice Survey and the Medical Home Index survey. We discovered that the results of these surveys supported our belief that without improving communication, we would have difficulty implementing any quality improvement initiatives or achieving medical home status. So, what was to be done?

We chose the Care Team Huddle as a strategy to improve daily communication, develop strategies for quality improvement, and to improve workflow and patient care. What is the Care Team Huddle you ask? The Care Team Huddle's foundations are rapid team formation and daily

preparation at the practice level. Huddles allow the practice to plan for any changes in the daily work flow, manage crises before they arise, and make adjustments in ways that improve patient care and work day quality for staff and providers (Stewart & Johnson, 2007). The Care Team Huddle occurs twice a day, in the morning and afternoon, prior to the beginning of the patient care day. The Huddle is a short meeting where very specific information is exchanged. This brief meeting should include information regarding the patient schedule, staffing, patient care, quality improvement initiative reminders, and brief celebrations of practice successes. So how did we begin?

Our entire Care Team met to introduce the concept and plan the details of the Huddle. We determined a central location and time that fit the needs of staff, providers and patients. We determine that we would meet for approximately five minutes each morning and after lunch. It was decided that our Care Team Huddle leader would be our office manager, who possesses a good overview of the daily schedule, staffing and workflow.

Our Huddle begins with a report of which Care Team members are present for the day and who may be leaving anytime throughout the day, which Care Team members will be working together, which providers may have patients in their schedule that have special needs, and documents or test results to prepare. Also included is a quick reminder of our quality improvement initiatives, how our current QI strategies are working, and any tweaking of these strategies that may need to occur. We then do a quick look at our measures to determine if we are on track with our QI goals. We end the Huddle with recognition of our QI accomplishments and a cheer to get us going for the day. All of this takes only five minutes.

So how are we doing? Because our entire team has been committed to the quality improvement and team-building process from the outset, our Care Team Huddles have been

consistently successful. We set a goal early in the process for 90% of our Care Team to be present at 90% of our Huddles. We recently celebrated two months of meeting this goal. Our staff and provider satisfaction, patient care, and workflow efficiency have all benefited from this one simple strategy. Just like any sports team, the key to success is commitment by every single team member, with ongoing encouragement and celebration of success. Good Luck with your team!

References

Stewart, E.E. & Johnson, B.C. (2007). Huddles: Increased efficiency in mere minutes each day.

Retrieved from <http://www.transformed.com/workingPapers/Huddles.pdf>

Resources to Help You Get Started

<http://www.ihi.org/knowledge/Pages/Changes/UseRegularHuddlesandStaffMeetingstoPlanProductionandtoOptimizeTeamCommunication.aspx>

<http://www.patientvisitredesign.com/featured-home-list/the-patient-care-team-huddle/>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxdG2_nZ2fc