

Improving access to EMR data – a success story

February 6, 2015

The value of getting started

What began as an AFHTO funded Innovation Project (spring 2014), has now been refined and deployed in 51 eligible teams and continues to spread into 2015. The Patient Encounter and Reporting Tracking (PET) System developed by Michelle Karker, Kevin Samson and Hope Latam at the East Wellington FHT was the springboard. A QIDS program goal is to increase consistency in EMR use across the membership. Together with the AFHTO TELUS PS Community of Practice (CoP), and the QIDSS themselves, all were positioned in the right place at the right time for this to happen – truly meeting the mandate of the AFHTO call for projects designed to support innovations that could be spread across the membership to improve capacity for measurement and improvement.



Hope Latam and Kevin Samson with patient.

The original innovation

The PET system is a TELUS PS EMR-based system that offers a simple and efficient way to capture, extract, track and report on patient encounters with Interdisciplinary Health Providers (IHPs). It involved the development of responsive electronic custom forms to capture the data, as well as customized queries to extract the data, which can then be used for MOHLTC reports to track patient encounters and gather information to support resource management and patient care. A number of QIDSS have helped their teams implement this IHP encounter tracking system. As word spread among the members of the TELUS PS CoP, we received emails containing questions like this, “is there any way we could complete the implementation (of the custom queries) before the end of January? It is the only system we have in place for Q3 reporting.”

How something that matters evolves, no matter how small or local

Currently in the PS EMR, built in functionality only allows limited access to data that have been saved in custom forms, even though they provide an effective method for entering information in a standardized data format. To extract the data from the PET custom forms, the East Wellington FHT worked with TELUS and CognisantMD to design a set of custom queries. The East Wellington FHT took its innovation to the next level and programmed the queries to be able to extract any data from any custom forms in PS. This caused quite a stir as it provided functionality that was not otherwise available in the PS EMR.

How innovation spreads and continues to evolve

Progress on the development of these custom queries became an item in the TELUS PS CoP Action Item List - the vehicle used in AFHTO EMR CoPs to prioritize and track the work of its members, including vendors, to improve EMR functionality. When surveyed, 86% of the CoP members ranked the deployment of the “Custom Queries” as a high priority. As a result, four webinars have been hosted since Dec. 2014 to guide members through the installation process and to supply time-limited permission codes required for the installation. New sessions are arranged as the need arises. The actual custom queries, webinar recordings, and an instruction guide have been posted on Trello, the CoP online forum.

As members continued to use the custom queries, it was noted that working with the raw data extracted from the forms was challenging in that it required a certain level of programming skills. In response to this, the East Wellington FHT developed a new tool to convert the data output into a simple spreadsheet format that is much easier to work with. This “Custom Query Converter” is also now being deployed across the province through the TELUS PS CoP and the network of QIDS specialists.

To-date, 51 out of about 100 FHTs identified as using the PS EMR have installed the custom queries. Data from the custom queries that has been extracted from the PET forms is being used to track resource utilization and guide program development. The data from other forms has been used to track the effectiveness and efficiency of various programs and services delivered by FHT’s. Useful measurements have included utilization and quit rates for smoking cessation programs, and metrics such as call volumes, peak call times, reported symptoms and resulting outcomes for nursing triage services.

Further to this, recognizing the potential benefits to PS users across the country, TELUS has invited Dr. Samson and Hope Latam to present this system at the national TELUS PS conference in Niagara Falls this spring.