

# BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARDS



## 2015

### Advancing manageable, meaningful measurement Markham Family Health Team

## “Measlesgate”: Stopping a Potential Outbreak in Its Tracks

In our data-driven world, it comes as no surprise that data, in the form of electronic medical records, are essential to keep primary care teams running efficiently. It’s important for your doctor to keep a record of your allergies, for example; to note whether there is a history of cancer in your family; and to maintain a record of the medications you are taking.

Primary care teams are using their EMRs to keep track of data that can improve the quality of patient care and also streamline their practices. The ability to find the appropriate record when needed is essential, as the Markham Family Health Team ably demonstrated in heading off a potential measles epidemic, an exercise the team dubbed Measlesgate. This victory highlighted

the fact that meaningful measurement can be as necessary to improving clinical outcomes as hands-on patient care.

When a positive measles exposure occurred in the clinic, the team turned to its records. Within four hours the FHT was able to provide the public health department with a list of all the patients who would have been at the clinic during the time of exposure. The team determined which staff members had been present on the days the case was assessed. Within half an hour, the team had arranged for 18 staff members and physicians to have urgent measles blood tests following exposure. The team also retrieved vaccination histories so patients could take the necessary steps to ensure that they were immune when informed by the public health department of their potential exposure.

In evaluating the response to the event afterward, staff realized that a simple EMR feature that provides a patient’s arrival time or indicated no-show status had been invaluable in determining whether there was exposure to measles or not.

The team was able to respond so promptly because their electronic medical records were comprehensive and up to date. Measlesgate underscored the many ways that an EMR can prove helpful in a primary care team’s operations. It also highlighted the value of the strong partnership between the team and the York Region Public Health Department; thanks to these ties, outreach to at-risk patients was seamless, and urgent blood tests for staff could be expedited.

The Markham FHT is sharing the lessons learned during Measlesgate in a presentation at the AFHTO 2015 conference, and a debriefing with the public health department has led to an update to the measles fact sheet on the team’s website.

