

BRIGHT LIGHTS AWARD

2014

Using data to improve transitions of care and care coordination North York Family Health Team

Making it easier for teams to access data needed to improve care



Electronic medical records improve direct care by allowing providers to record and share important information about a patient. But they have another role, providing the raw data needed to raise the quality of care and tailor services for different groups.

The challenge for primary care providers is how to get at those data, since the way patient information is recorded in health records is usually quite different from how it needs to be structured for measurement and improvement projects.

The North York Family Health Team has won a Bright Lights Award from the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario for its use of DPT (data presentation tool) software to extract cleaned, standardized data from electronic records. Access to clean, standardized data is extremely important for quality improvement, because it permits health teams to keep track of health issues among their patients and make it possible to measure whether treatments and innovations are having a good effect.

The importance of North York FHT's work doesn't end there. It's also significant that this project involved multiple teams -- enabling data and quality specialists in clusters of teams in Toronto and Kingston to more easily extract standard data from medical records, and therefore produce better reports on quality of care

Work on the project is continuing, as the team puts data on more chronic conditions and cancer, and family history through the DPT "cleaning" process. The North York FHT has also started a user group, to share questions among other primary care providers and even with healthcare providers in other provinces. Over a six-month period, the project improved data coding by 22 per cent and people surveyed called the program useful and good to work with.

Not only did they make a difference for themselves and the teams they partnered with on this project, North York FHT's project has also created a legacy of tools and templates for sharing data— valuable resources that can be used by primary care providers across Ontario that want to work together with shared data to improve care. This project has built the capacity of its own local community as well as paving the way for the broader community to move with them.