

Changing primary care performance measurement: Honey, we need to talk

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Context:

The Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO) voluntarily launched an ongoing performance measurement process called “Data to Decisions” (D2D) in 2014, to achieve the organization’s strategic direction to improve care and demonstrate value of team-based, patient-centered comprehensive primary care. D2D included a novel composite measure of quality based on what matters to patients, providers and the system. The 7th iteration was released in March 2018.

Objective:

Learn about what it takes to change performance measurement in primary care by doing it.

Study design:

Developmental evaluation using an action research approach. Operational documents (minutes, performance reports, conversations via email etc) were considered. The experience of primary care teams was described using template analysis, from which emerged enablers for participation and changes to make subsequent iterations of D2D easier and/or more meaningful.

Participants and Setting:

184 Interdisciplinary primary care teams, members of the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO) serving approximately 25% of Ontarians.

Main and Secondary Outcome Measures:

Themes emerging from the experience of primary care teams with measurement.

Results:

Conversations were both the vehicle and data source for facilitating and learning from D2D. Learnings included: awareness of divergence in perceived priority of D2D and problem-solving capacity and enablers: relationships and philosophy of getting started in small safe ways. Notably, the novel composite measure of quality was not apparently a driver for participation even though it was instrumental in demonstrating that higher quality is related to lower cost.

Conclusion:

Conversations support “getting started” which therefore supports voluntary participation and learning. AFHTO members have learned that when it comes to performance measurement in primary care, “Honey, we NEED to talk!”

Learning objectives

1. Describe role of conversation as a tool to facilitate AND measure progress in performance measurement
2. List enablers of performance measurement: “getting started” philosophy, relationships
3. Consider the possibility that the actual measures might not be important drivers of participation in performance measurement