

Enhanced Access for the Safety Net

Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center

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Session 3B

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MacColl Institute at
Group Health Cooperative



About Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center

- FQHC
- 12,309 patients through 63,164 visits
- 6 sites: Main sites in Allston and Waltham, 2 school-based sites in Allston, vision center, and admin offices
- 62% of patients live at or below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
- 45% of patients are uninsured (HSN) despite Massachusetts health care reform
- 47% of patients require services in a language other than English
- Only 11% of patients have private insurance

Making the Case for Enhanced Access

- Patient Satisfaction
- Clinic Efficiency
- Staff Satisfaction



Making the Case

1) Patient Satisfaction/Access

- Too many patients, too few providers and/ or exam room space.
- Many walk-in patients putting extra strain on an already strained system.
- Unable to accommodate same-day or urgent visits for our established patients.



Making the Case, cont.

2) Clinic Efficiency

- Medical Assistants with limited team responsibilities.
- Nurses bogged down with triaging patients for a very limited supply of appointments.
- Providers overwhelmed by too many patients per session because of add-on and walk-in patients.
- Very few opportunities to refer patients for additional self-management support.
- Difficult access to patient appointments but also relatively high no-show rate since appointments were booked so far in advance.

Making the Case, cont.

- 3) **Staff Satisfaction:** All of the previous exacerbated by lack of integrated team work and limited opportunities to explore innovative changes.



Goals for Enhanced Access

- Balance Panel Sizes
- Improve Appointment Access/ Decrease no-show rate
- Optimize Clinical Care Teams.
 - Expand the roles of “Provider Extenders” like MA’s, RN’s, Care Coordinators, and others to improve patient engagement, clinic efficiency, clinical outcomes, and staff satisfaction.

Strategy for Enhancing Access

- Analyzing empanelment and continuity data on a monthly basis to identify which providers are open to accepting new patients.
- Modifying appointment-booking protocols to increase patient access.
- Optimizing clinical care teams
- Piloting innovative appointment structures in order to improve clinic efficiency, staff satisfaction, and patient engagement.

Enhanced Access Results

- Patients are able to get an appointment – usually with their own provider -- when they want it and are more likely to keep the appointment.
- Nurse-run chronic disease management visits, group education classes, and shared nursing visits help providers manage their chronically ill patients and help patients to be more engaged in management of their health.
 - Clinical evidence: Diabetic patients have been able to improve their A1c's due to collaboration between providers and DM RN's
 - Improved B/P's for Diabetics in pilot team—targeted outreach and follow up with B/P Nurse

Enhanced Access Improves Team Care

- Providers have appreciated the help of other team members for managing their patients.
- Team members have appreciated their expanded roles and responsibilities in patient care.
- Improved internal communication has resulted in modified work flows to improve clinic efficiency.

Outcomes

- No-show rate has decreased from 25% to under 15%
- Number of days until 3rd next available appointment has decreased over the past year from seven days to three.
- 67% continuity rate for appointments booked with personal provider. 90% for appointments booked with someone on the clinical care team.

Lessons Learned

- **Ongoing Importance of Data:** Constant vigilance required to fine-tune provider panel size, continuity, supply and demand of patient appointments, and patient fill-rate and show-rate.
- **Assessing Staff Satisfaction:** When expanding team-member roles, it is vital to assess staff satisfaction and be responsive to issues that arise. (Dartmouth Green Book)
- **Group Visits/ Shared Medical Appointments:** Many patients benefit from these, but the initial recruiting can be challenging. Other patients may volunteer to help recruit other patients once convinced of their utility.

Next Steps

- Continued expansion of the RN role to assist patients with other chronic conditions.
- Use of “Provider Extenders” to help with patient engagement, education, and navigation of the health care system.
- Long-range goal: Capital Campaign to build a larger facility.



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Questions?