

RIQI/RI-PTN TCPI Exemplary Practice Story: North Kingstown Family Practice

North Kingstown Family Practice is a single provider micro-practice run by Dr. Lynn Ho. Our practice serves approximately 750 patients in the moderately affluent, homogenous, suburban community of North Kingstown. As described on our website, <http://www.drlynnho.net/>, the success of our practice lies in our efforts to “provide each patient with exactly the care they want and need.” Our practice is a leader in providing excellent primary care as can be seen through high achievement and benchmark performance on our quality measures and other results tracked through our data driven processes. With Patient and Family Engagement as a cornerstone of our practice design, our micro-practice has evolved to integrate a patient centered approach leveraging technology to meet the needs of patients we serve.

Treating and Empowering the Whole Patient to Achieve Excellence in Quality Performance

As a primary care practice, the tenets put forth by Barbara Starfield are at the core of what we do. In line with this approach, our goals are to provide first contact and easy access to continuous, comprehensive and coordinated care. When a practice provides access continuity, comprehensiveness and care coordination, then by definition one is providing good primary care, which saves money and improves care quality. Primary care is not about ‘checking a box’ or tracking a metric. It’s about treating a unique patient with their own perspective on health and wellness. It’s about providing support and advocacy that helps patients achieve and attain their own health goals. Given this, at North Kingstown Family Practice, we believe that, to provide the best care, you need to make sure patients have *exactly the care they need when and how they want and need it*. As seen in the included table, our Clinical Quality Metrics are excellent because we provide care that supports our patients’

North Kingstown Family Practice Performance Chart			
Quality Measure	Performance Target	Current Performance	National MIPS Benchmark
Prevention			
Tobacco Use: Screening and Cessation Intervention	100%	100%	83%
Body Mass Index (BMI) Screening and Follow-up Plan	100%	100%	45%
Screening for Clinical Depression and Follow-Up Plan	100%	95%	28%
Disease Management			
A1c Good Control <8	99%	93%	64%*

At North Kingstown Family Practice, our excellent Quality Measures are a reflection of the patient centered care we provide. As patients are provided with education on how to live a healthy lifestyle, we have corresponding high rates of screening. Also, patients are empowered to live healthy lifestyles that address various health issues they may have.

understanding of the health process and the fact that their health depends on their *own choices*. Patient engagement is therefore a critical piece of our approach. Because we work to provide patients with education and an understanding of what they can do to be healthy, we don’t need to ‘run around’ after an A1C or a high blood pressure result. Healthy changes have to come from the patient and must be the patient’s own goal. We go after the *big picture* of patients being able to live a healthy life and being able to choose what they want, rather than a focus on individual metrics and results that don’t provide the full story. Ultimately, through empowering patients in this way, we find success in building health. Our Quality Metrics, such as having 93% *A1C Good Control* reflect this.

Leveraging Technology to Provide ‘Back to Basics,’ Personalized, Primary Care

Another successful feature of our practice lies in the development of systems that are highly efficient through leveraging technology and dispensing with mid-level administrative layers. As a micro-practice, Dr. Ho is the single staff person who handles all aspects of the practice through streamlined, paperless processes. Key to our approach is the availability of multiple methods of communication and intervention, including texting, secure email, telephone care, patient portal for results, patient on-line appointment scheduling, inpatient visits (as needed to coordinate care), home visits, and virtual visits (e-visits, since 2006) for simple problems, such as sinus infections, urinary tract infections, poison ivy, etc. By making all of these modalities readily available, we are easily accessible to our patients and thus able to provide the right care at the right time. We

also leverage <https://howyourhealth.org/>, a patient-entered web-based health and health care quality check-up system; we collect our patient's pre-visit medical history through an on-line instant medical history platform (medicalhistory.com); we use Prime Registry (<https://primeregistry.org/>) which integrates with our Electronic Health Record (EHR) to collect patient quality data. Patients will typically send descriptions of their history and health issues prior to appointments. This helps with making EHR documentation more efficient and we are better able to focus on *the patient* during a visit. Lastly, leveraging technology in this way also ensures that we are optimizing the coordination of care we provide. Approximately 85% of test data comes back to our practice electronically. When we don't automatically receive information, we use the CurrentCare Viewer (Rhode Island's Health Information Exchange- HIE) to find the data we need.

Using technology in this way is part of our practice approach that focuses on building health confidence for our patients. Health confidence for patients is the ability for them to engage in and make desired changes in health and health behaviors. Using data collected through the How's Your Health on-line system, we are able to assess and track information about our patients' confidence and other behaviors. From this we know the percentage of patients that say they are "very confident to control and manage most of their health problems" has increased over time from 49% in 2006 to 68% in 2018 (current national average: 50%). We believe that this metric, and other key patient entered metrics, should be the primary feedback stream that a primary care practice responds to and gears improvement efforts towards. Arguably, our patients' use of technology can be seen as an element of their engagement in their care. If the patients know that you expect them to engage with on-line tools as part of their care, they will do it. This is part of the *mutual* expectations that we have with our patients: we are available and provide care for them and they, in turn, need to actively *participate* in their care. Technology also allows us to provide enhanced continuity, engagement, and follow-up. For instance, we will often use technology to 'boomerang' items that require follow-up. Through our *Reminder Plus* system, we can setup an automatic reminder to email to a patient if they need to get a lab, email a blood pressure reading, or check in on an upcoming smoking cessation quit date or an exercise plan. This ensures that that communication loop with our patients is maintained and we can work together to stay on-top of their health concerns.

Conclusion

We are proud of what patients do through the care we provide at North Kingstown Family Practice. When considering the importance of health confidence, we are particularly proud of our patients who have grown in this area and are now better able to advocate for themselves and their health. For example, one patient who joined our practice in 2008 initially scored very low in her health confidence. In 2010, she was admitted to the hospital with urosepsis, but Dr. Ho was not contacted. At the hospital, they pumped her with fluids and she ended up having pulmonary edema. When Dr. Ho finally spoke with her, the patient was experiencing pain, but she didn't even realize she could advocate for herself and ask for pain medication. After that experience, things have gone uphill. She now has the ability to ask for help when she needs it. On New Year's Day last year, she reached out and arranged to see Dr. Ho to address neck pain instead of going to the ER. Her confidence is much improved, in that she knows she has someone she can count on when she needs help.

As patients, we all need to have confidence along with someone in the healthcare field advocating and looking out for us. Through our patient centered approach that leverages technology, North Kingstown Family Medicine provides the support and interventions that lead to increases in this confidence and in overall health. Our patients are empowered and we achieve success in providing excellent primary care. Our quality metrics and data support the exemplary nature of the care provided by our micro-practice.

Appendix

CurrentCare Viewer Story:

<http://www.currentcareri.org/KnowledgeCenter/ViewerResources/MyCurrentCareStory.aspx#710132-dr-lynn-ho-north-kingstown-family-practice>



Lynn Ho, MD

North Kingstown Family Practice

How has CurrentCare helped you do your job?

I am just adoring CurrentCare! I am checking every patient who comes in and enrolling them on the spot, if not enrolled.

I use it to avoid ordering duplicative tests, cover for other providers, track down measures for quality projects, and also when my EMR is down.

What information do you find most useful?

Labs: A patient with leukemia wanted his CBC from RIH (they send consult notes, but it takes a few days). I pulled it up in CurrentCare and was able to share this with the patient in a timely fashion.

Meds: Track down that “blue triangular” med from the walk in or specialist.

Do you have recommendations for others in similar roles?

- Early – check the entire next day’s schedule from the Viewer log in page.
- End game – get list of people enrolled and non-enrolled in your practice. At check in, work the list of people not enrolled yet.