

How a Midwestern Clinic Will Thrive Under Value-Based Care

Evolving naturally into population health

Hutchinson Clinic is a multi-specialty rural health clinic in South Central Kansas. It offers a team-based approach to diagnosis and treatment for primary care, walk-in-care, and specialty care. The practice operates multiple outreach clinics as well.

Hutchinson Clinic is also a pioneer in the application of population health to clinical practice in its region. According to Verlin Janzen, MD, who is a family physician, partner, and medical director for population health and medical informatics at Hutchinson Clinic, their population health strategy was implemented through an evolutionary process that has moved them forward to broader, more sophisticated applications along the path toward value-based care.

THE SOLUTION

From paper to pop health

Hutchinson Clinic had been tracking clinical quality measures, such as the date of the patient's last mammogram or colonoscopy, using paper charts, lists, and Excel spreadsheets. They started their journey into technology-based population health several years ago when they began using an EHR integration tool enabling the practice to receive pop-up reminders within the EHR, which alerted staff to gaps in care.

In time, the practice switched to NextGen® Population Health. Initially, this change to a more advanced solution revealed surprising weakness in the practice's historic performance on closing gaps in care. Colonoscopy and mammography rates stood around 30%. Ultimately, using a population health solution that was integrated into the EHR led to dramatic improvements in these numbers and overall quality of care.

"Everybody was shocked," recalls Dr. Janzen. "We all thought we were doing better than we were. It goes back to the old adage, measure what matters. When you measure it, you make significant improvements.

"Up to this point, our solution had been limited to a reminder tool. NextGen Population Health continues to serve as a reminder tool, but it also became a way to get reliable numbers on our performance on quality measures."

THE BENEFITS

Hutchinson Clinic's implementation of a population-health-based strategy continues to expand. Note that the clinic is not on NextGen Healthcare's enterprise EHR platform, but can still use NextGen Population Health, which is EHR vendor-agnostic, to achieve its goals for value-based care.

CLIENT PROFILE

Hutchinson Clinic

- A rural, multi-specialty health clinic serving South Central Kansas
- Mission: Maintain a culture of excellence by delivering the most advanced, timely, and compassionate care possible
- Care provided by more than 100 clinicians and 600 staff
- Manage approximately 85,000 patient charts
- 14 outreach and walk-in clinics in surrounding communities

NEXTGEN HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS

- NextGen® Population Health

HIGHLIGHTS



Better patient care, as evidenced by improved metrics on closing gaps in care



More effective communication at the point of care, prompting patients to take action to improve their health



Improved provider satisfaction, because achievements can be measured and communicated



Improved metrics for quality payment programs



Enhanced long-term financial viability for the practice

“We joined more insurance companies’ quality payment programs,” explains Dr. Janzen. “Each has its own quality metrics. We add them as initiatives into NextGen Healthcare’s population health tool so that we can track and monitor relevant measures.

“Our long-term goal is to be successful in population health and value-based care. That’s where we’re looking for financial benefit in the future—starting now, but hopefully it gets even better with time.”

Practice better medicine

Dr. Janzen believes that incorporating population health as part of a clinical strategy allows him and his colleagues to practice better medicine. He is amassing increasing professional support for this viewpoint. When results of clinical practice can be measured and communicated, providers achieve a greater sense of satisfaction.

“I had a partner who was not in favor of incorporating value-based care measures into his practice in the early stages. Then one day he said to me, ‘You know, I didn’t like this value-based care or population health stuff in the beginning. But, with what we’re doing, I go home at night and I feel like I did a really good job for my patients. I didn’t experience this feeling as often before we began measuring our results.’”

Maintain financial viability

Dr. Janzen is a firm believer that if his practice doesn’t continue along the value-based care pathway, then in five to 10 years it’s no longer going to be financially viable. However, he notes that not all colleagues share this belief.

“We have partners who believe that value-based care is going to go away. The number of physicians who think this way is getting smaller, but there are still some, oftentimes specialists, who do. They say the government tries stuff all the time, this is just another one of their ‘things.’ Just hang in there for five years; it’s all going to go away. Fee-for-service will be back the way it used to be.

“I think the chance of that is about zero,” adds Dr. Janzen.

Dr. Janzen notes that adoption of value-based payment models have progressed further on the East and West Coasts, compared to the Midwest where his practice is located. At present, only about 2% of the Hutchinson Clinic’s revenue is tied to value-based care. However, Dr. Janzen still feels that the investment in NextGen Population Health has been worthwhile.

“Even with only 2% of our revenue tied to value-based payment models, we definitely got our money back from the investment in NextGen Population Health,” says Dr. Janzen.

Improve communication at the point of care

A key feature of the NextGen Population Health solution: It puts information in front of the physician at the point of care.

“Our practice has had very poor success at turning a phone call into a mammogram or colonoscopy. Putting information in front of the physician at the point of care is how you get patients to follow up on exams, get mammograms and colonoscopies, and take other actions that improve health and can be measured as part of quality care initiatives.”

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Verlin Janzen, MD
Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians
Family Physician, Medical Director, and Population Health Director, Hutchinson Clinic

The road ahead

Currently, Hutchinson Clinic's quality measures are all tied to value-based care programs through either Medicare or commercial insurance payers. Dr. Janzen's goal is to reach the point where departments within the clinic can select criteria to be measured and monitored, according to the needs of their specialty. The goal is both to help clinicians become more aware of their achievements and, potentially, be more proactive with insurance companies with regard to negotiating higher reimbursements for better quality care.

Dr. Janzen admits that the progress toward achieving the full potential of population health has been slower than he first anticipated. Nevertheless, he is happy with the direction his practice is going.

"We just had a meeting with representatives from one of the quality payment programs in which we participate. They told us our metrics are far better than their averages. I attribute that largely to NextGen Population Health solutions, as well as the hard work we've done to get buy-in from our providers."

"I think in the next five to seven years, our value-based care revenue is going to increase, and will approach 40 percent, comparable to practices on the East and West Coasts."

Verlin Janzen, MD
Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians
Family Physician, Medical Director, and Population Health Director, Hutchinson Clinic



HOW CAN WE HELP?

Partner with us at **855-510-6398** or **results@nextgen.com**.