

Quality management programs support physician focus on high-quality patient services:

provincial partnership develops QMPs for colonoscopy, mammography and pathology

by The Quality Management Partnership

In 2013, Ivana Marzura, an executive in a software firm, visited her family physician after noting a lump in her left breast. Her doctor promptly sent her for a mammogram and an ultrasound.

Within a week, her mammography report was returned with a finding of “suspicious,” and over the next month she had several tests and biopsies at the North York Breast Centre. Ultimately, a pathologist interpreted the biopsies and she was diagnosed with bilateral breast cancer.

While not the outcome she was hoping for, Ms. Marzura is grateful that within days of receiving the results of her mammogram from her primary care physician, she saw a breast surgeon at North York General Hospital, and her treatment — a double mastectomy, chemotherapy and reconstructive surgery — began well within target timeframes for care.

Today, she is healthy and well, thanks to a team of highly skilled and competent professionals, including her primary care physician, radiologists, pathologists, oncologist and breast surgeons.

“Everything worked as it’s supposed to, from identifying there might be a problem to making the referrals and getting me seen quickly,” said Ms. Marzura, who also recognizes that such expediency is not necessarily the norm. “I felt really lucky, but I have also heard

many stories from people for whom the process didn’t go as smoothly.”

Ms. Marzura’s experience with breast cancer spurred her to join one of the Quality Management Partnership’s three expert advisory panels, where she, along with another member of the public, represented the voice of the

the quality of care and improve patient safety, increase the consistency in the quality of care provided across facilities, and improve public confidence by increasing accountability and transparency.

Ms. Marzura had previously assumed that all mammography is

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patient/service user in developing a quality management program (QMP) for mammography in Ontario.

Quality Management Partnership

The Quality Management Partnership, a collaboration between Cancer Care Ontario and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, was formed in 2013 to develop provincial QMPs in three health service areas: colonoscopy, mammography and pathology.

The Partnership’s goals are to support physicians and facilities to enhance

performed to the same standards everywhere in Ontario. As an expert advisory panel member, she was surprised to learn that while consistency exists for mammography offered through the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP), more work is needed to ensure the same consistency is present across all facilities that provide mammography in Ontario.

“If you are getting screened for cancer in the OBSP, you can be assured the service will meet the same high-quality standards wherever it is pro-

vided,” she noted. “But outside the OBSP, that may not be the case.”

The Partnership’s recent report, *Building on Strong Foundations: Inaugural Report on Quality in Colonoscopy, Mammography and Pathology* (available at www.qmpontario.ca), helps to illustrate the variability in the application of standards and programs in each health service area that the quality management programs are intended to address. For example, in early 2015, 190 (78%) facilities (hospitals and independent health facilities) participated in the OBSP and 56 (22%) did not participate and were therefore not under the OBSP’s oversight.

What Are Quality Management Programs?

Quality management programs take an integrated approach to physician and facility quality management that incorporates the patient/service user’s perspective and priorities. They also align with physicians’ goals to provide the best quality patient care possible.

“We need to make important system design changes to improve patient care,” said Dr. Sandip K. SenGupta, a Professor of Pathology and Oncology at Queen’s University, the Medical Laboratory Director and Deputy Head at the Department of Pathology and Molecular Medicine at Kingston General Hospital and Hotel Dieu Hospital, and a member of the pathology expert advisory panel. “I think the work we have done on the pathology quality management program will help establish consistent approaches for the whole province, reduce discrepancies in diagnoses and improve the overall standard of health care in Ontario.”

QMPs include implementing provincial standards; reporting on quality at the physician, facility, regional and provincial levels; and providing support to clinical leaders to help drive continuous quality improvement.

A network of clinical leaders was identified as a key success factor for the implementation of the QMPs. This network will be composed of physicians with expertise in the health service area, at the facility, regional and provincial levels. In these supportive

roles, the clinical leads will engage peers in discussions about quality and support physicians to access opportunities and tools for continuous quality improvement. They will also provide an oversight role for quality, and look to identify gaps in quality improvement resources and supports.

Designing Physician And Patient-Driven Programs

The Quality Management Partnership worked with the three expert advisory panels in the three health service areas. The panels developed recommendations for QMPs with the goal of applying quality standards more consistently, and ensuring Ontarians will receive the same high-quality care wherever they are, whether in a hospital, clinic or private lab.

Once the expert advisory panels finalized their recommendations in the fall of 2014, an extensive stakeholder consultation process was conducted with physicians, patients/service users, health system leaders and other stakeholders. The final recommendations were shared with stakeholders through various engagements over the past

year. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care approved the recommendations in December 2015.

Next Steps

When implemented, the QMPs will ensure that, as Ms. Marzura says, “regardless of what door you go through, you will know the quality of that service is being monitored and measured according to a standard so that services are consistent across the province.”

Over the coming months, physicians will hear more from the Quality Management Partnership on implementation, which will be phased in slowly, with an initial focus on establishing the clinical leadership structure and initiating quality reporting at a facility level.

The Partnership looks forward to working with physicians on the next steps of this initiative. For more information, visit www.qmpontario.ca, or send questions to info@qmpontario.ca. ■

The Quality Management Partnership is a collaboration between CCO and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.