

MEMBER SHOWCASE

Case study



Improving patient care through better data

The Practice Group

The challenge

The Practice Group (TPG) is one of the largest primary care multi-site GP surgery operators, with 41 GP practices providing care to 200,000 patients. The organisation's scale allows it to draw on a vast body of primary care data to identify best practice and share learning.

But there are a number of challenges to making use of this data. In particular, the disparate nature of clinical systems creates significant obstacles when data mining for actionable insights and opportunities.

Despite the challenges, TPG was resolved to consolidate data from three clinical systems to gain insight into factors driving patient demand for primary care. This move was fundamental to developing new ways of working to improve patient experience and health outcomes.

What was done

A project began in April 2015 to develop a market-leading data consolidation, analysis and reporting tool to combine all data and produce detailed surgery-specific reports. By January 2016, a reporting suite was approved for distribution across TPG's surgeries and is now being released monthly.

These timely, accurate reports provide practice teams with real actionable information that allows them to make evidence-based decisions to deliver better care for patients.

The content of the reports are regularly reviewed. For example, TPG recently added additional information on appointment waiting times and the link with did-not-attends (DNAs).

Sharing performance data drawn from 41 GP surgeries (in 25 clinical commissioning groups) has provided a unique pooling of data-based insight and learning that is benefiting patients.

The results

The Practice Group continually improves data quality and report outputs to identify how patient demographics, health conditions and deprivation factors shape demand for primary care, allowing the organisation to better plan care delivery models and answer questions such as:

- When 10 per cent of patients consume 43 per cent of all appointments, why do they have ten-minute appointments?
- How can we treat patients coded with depression, who use 17 per cent of appointments, differently?
- Why do DNA rates vary so much?

TPG is now able to start answering these questions and change how it works. For example, the organisation has enhanced case management approaches targeting patients who most frequently attend primary care.

Surgery reporting packs can be adapted to show practice managers different aspects of their services. Each GP surgery is different; a 'one size fits all model' is neither what's best for patients nor for general practice.

Practice managers can identify other TPG surgeries with similar demographics and demand so they can share best practice, innovation, support and guide one another through implementing positive changes.

Overcoming barriers

The barriers TPG faced were:

- how to store, organise and process large volumes of generated data – over 60 gigabytes in total and containing tables with up to 40 million records
- how to mitigate the variability of clinical system usage from surgery to surgery, where both data input templates and reporting differ
- how to present complex data in a way that is meaningful so new ways of working can be identified, implemented and communicated.

To overcome them, the organisation:

- reviewed and understood the data and how it might be used to enhance patient care
- established and automated the process of downloading, cleansing and enhancing data to make it easier to analyse and interpret
- designed reports tailored to end users, easy to understand and helpful in the identification of opportunities to improve patient care. Reports went through various iterations and were tested by end users.

Key learning

- **The project identifies the significant variances that exist across GP surgeries and the impact that differing demographics have on general practice. Any solution to effective demand management has to reflect individual practice factors.**
- **Primary care needs to work differently so patients receive the best possible levels of care and improved healthcare outcomes at a time when there is rising demand on general practice and increasing pressure on resources.**
- **TPG was able to provide evidence to NHS England and clinical commissioning groups so that commissioning strategies and general practice service specifications truly reflect the needs of local patients.**
- **TPG's patient base has twice the national average number of patients within the most deprived decile.**

Takeaway tips

- Make sure you understand the data.
- Ensure reports are detailed enough to be meaningful.
- Trial and test reports with end users.
- Involve end users in the report design, and spend time training.



For more information

Please contact Allan Johnson, chief executive of The Practice Group: allan.johnson@thepracticegroup.co.uk

June 2017
