

The Patient Experience Tool: Incorporating the patient's voice into quality improvement activities

The GPSC's Practice Support Program (PSP) supports family physicians to transform primary care and ensure that all patients in BC have access to quality primary health care that meets their needs. Supporting physician practices to undertake quality improvement work is an important component of the program's goal of improving care. This includes ensuring that patients are able to share their experiences of care, and that their voices inform health care change.

To gather patients' perspectives on the care they receive, PSP partnered with physicians to create the GPSC Patient Experience Tool. The tool gathers information using a survey of 14 to 20 questions covering topics like wait times, office hours, and coordination of care. Six mandatory provincial questions are included, after which practices can customize the survey by adding questions from a bank of prewritten options (with the ability to change out questions once an improvement has been achieved).

The survey interface enables patients to efficiently and anonymously share information about their experiences and interactions with the practice. Responses are accessible to practice team members via an easy-to-use, web-based dashboard—survey data are anonymized and aggregated in real time on a secure platform (to ensure anonymity, a minimum of five responses to a question are required before results are accessible).

The tablets on which patients complete the survey are issued by PSP and are rotated between participating clinics every 6 to 8 months;

however, hardware can be made available for longer periods to practices that choose to survey their patients for ongoing quality improvement activities.

PSP regional support team members are available to coach practices on how to set up the tablet and survey, and can support practices to:

- Determine readiness and get started.
- Select meaningful and relevant survey questions.
- Incorporate the survey into clinic workflow, including determining team member roles and responsibilities.
- Review results and use data to identify, plan, implement, and measure quality improvement activities.
- Help navigate compensation and certification requirements/benefits.

Data gathered through the Patient Experience Tool can be used to:

- Inform quality improvement activities.
- Encourage longitudinal care.
- Support interprofessional teams.
- Contribute to a family practice's adoption of the attributes of a patient medical home.
- Bolster a practice's readiness to participate in a primary care network.

Initially piloted by 39 clinics, the Patient Experience Tool survey has been completed by more than 6000 patients since 2016. One practice in Langley that implemented the tool heard from 140 patients who provided their perspectives on the practice's office environment, their relationship with the doctor, their interactions with the health care team, and their

confidence in their self-management skills. Results from the patients indicated that there was room for improvement in wait times and clinic access. The practice team, supported by the regional support team, used this feedback to

initiate a number of quality improvement activities, including completing appointment forms in advance and helping patients plan for effective appointments by telling them what to expect. By implementing these strategies, the practice

team was able to cut patients' average wait time from arrival to being seen by two-thirds—from 60 minutes to 20 minutes.

In addition to using data for quality improvement activities, family physicians can opt to share aggregated data with their local division to help support community planning, identify local population needs, understand the impact of local initiatives, and see how their results compare to those of their division peers.

Compensation and certification

PSP offers compensation and certification for time spent on this (and other) practice improvement work:

- Compensation: Doctors and eligible team members can receive PSP compensation for up to 15 hours.
- Certification: Doctors can receive up to 45 certified Mainpro+ credits (three credits per hour, for up to 15 hours).

Visit www.gpsc.bc.ca to learn more. ■

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This article is the opinion of the GPSC and has not been peer reviewed by the BCMJ Editorial Board.