

Utah

The Health Plan Partnership

Public Health Problem

People living with diabetes who are members of health plans are not receiving sufficient rates of annual eye exams. If people do not receive eye exams, people with diabetes may suffer further damage to the eye that could ultimately lead to blindness.

The objectives of this partnership were the following:

- Quality Improvement officers from major Utah health plans to meet monthly
- Quality Improvement officers work collectively to improve quality of care for health plan members with diabetes.

Taking Action

Interventions to increase eye exam rates included:

- Patient education
- Patient incentives
- Programs to increase provider awareness
- System changes
 - Automated phone call reminder system
 - Improved documentation of eye exam.

Involvement/Partners

- Quality improvement officers from major Utah health plans
- Health plan medical directors
- Quality improvement organization

Implications and Impact

The partnership has allowed participating health plans to identify and develop common solutions to overcome barriers related to improved diabetes medical care, including screening eye exams. Funds provided to health plans by the Utah DPCP were used as seed money to implement programs to measure diabetes complication testing, better identify patients with diabetes, and provide people with diabetes with reminders to obtain clinical exams. Since implementing the partnership in 1999, diabetes patient care has improved. Eye exam rates have improved more than the national rates, suggesting the partnership had direct impact. In addition to the eye exam intervention, participating plans, with support from the Utah DPCP, have worked successfully to improve measures related to A1C, lipid, and hypertension in patients with diabetes.

Lessons Learned

- Focus interventions where data are available.
- Identify ways the partnership is useful to its members.
- Obtain buy-in from the biggest players.
- Plan with evaluation in mind.