

## ***Finding Innovative Ways to Increase Colorectal Cancer Screening: The Best Test is the One That Gets Done***

### **Summary**

Sanford Health chose a clinic from each region to pilot a project intended to improve colorectal cancer screening rates. The clinics received 100 Fecal Immunochemical Tests (FIT) to mail to patients who were past due for colorectal cancer screening and were clinically appropriate for the FIT test. Beyond the basic parameters, the clinics were then allowed to create their own processes for identifying patients and reaching out to them. The minimum expectation was to track how many FITs were sent out, how many were completed, the results and any positives be followed up with a colonoscopy.

### **Key Components**

The RN Care Managers in charge of the project used the clinic's registry to identify patients who were significantly overdue for screening and reviewed their charts to make sure that the FIT test was appropriate. They called patients instead of waiting until their next office visit, and provided education about the need for screening and two other test options, if they refused a colonoscopy. The Care Managers identified barriers such as cost, fear/aversion to the prep, fear/aversion of the procedure, and time away from work and provided additional education. In many cases the patients weren't aware that the colonoscopy prep has significantly improved and that if no polyps are detected, they don't have to repeat the procedure for another 10 years. The timeframe for their next screening with the FIT and Cologuard options were also explained.



**Watertown Sanford Health Clinic staff receiving their 2019 Innovator of the Year Award. Left to Right: Carrie Hawley (Nursing Supervisor), Karen Raml (RN Care Manager), Lindsey Givens (RN Care Manager) and Cindy Mydland (Clinic Director).**

## Challenge

Sanford Watertown Clinic is responsible for the colorectal cancer screening of over 2,000 lives in their community. In August 2018, despite years of consistent, repeated attempts to schedule patients for colonoscopies, the clinic's colorectal cancer screening rate remained at 66.4%, well below the national goal of 80% screened. Among the most common reasons cited by patients were: cost, aversion to colonoscopy prep, fear of the procedure and time away from work. Even with persistent education and reminders, patients still refused a colonoscopy, so the clinic decided to pursue other tactics: embracing the organizational policy allowing staff to practice at the top of their license, leveraging electronic medical record (EMR) reporting capabilities and promoting alternative screening methods.

## Results

One hundred FIT tests were mailed with a 55% return rate. Staff is still calling patients to return the test if they have not done so already. Three of the tests had positive results. All three then completed a colonoscopy, and polyps were found and removed in two of those patients. In addition, 21 patients agreed to complete a colonoscopy instead of doing the FIT test. Ten of the 21 patients have completed the colonoscopy and three were found to have tubular adenomas (pre-cancerous polyp). The remaining 11 patients are scheduled for consultations with a general surgeon who will perform the colonoscopy. Screening rates for the clinic increased from 66% to almost 75% in just a few months.

## Solution

There were two significant takeaways from this project: 1) providing alternative screening options to the colonoscopy and 2) taking the time to educate the patient on the need for screening, identifying any barriers, addressing and removing those barriers.

The Watertown Sanford Health Clinic was the recipient of the 2019 Innovator of the Year award from the SD Comprehensive Cancer Control Program. The Innovator of the Year award recognizes an organization that has tested a new idea for colorectal cancer screening improvement and has reason to believe that their innovation will lead to greater success.

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