

# SPOTLIGHT ON IMPROVEMENT

*Spotlight on Improvement tells real stories of health care providers and systems improving the quality of care they deliver. Our goal is to spark ideas that will improve health care quality in Washington state.*



## Rockwood Clinic

Adding Choosing Wisely® recommendations into existing culture of quality

### BACKGROUND

Founded in 1930, the Rockwood Clinic is based in Washington's third largest city, Spokane. Today, the Rockwood clinic has 73 clinic locations in Washington and Idaho and has approximately 300 providers with primary, specialty and urgent care services. The Rockwood Clinic is part of the Rockwood Health System, which partners with Deaconess Hospital (388 bed facility) and Valley Hospital (123 bed facility) to provide an integrated health care delivery system in eastern Washington.<sup>1</sup>

### PROBLEM

When the Choosing Wisely® campaign launched in 2011, Rockwood was like most health organizations across the country—scratching their heads and wondering how do you implement recommendations that are so different from the typical “do more” guidelines, such as health screenings or A1c tests for diabetics?

### SOLUTION

After Rockwood's leadership made a commitment to incorporating Choosing Wisely into its system, the next step was to figure out how to implement the recommendations. Rockwood chose to start by measuring their clinical practice, in part, by using the Choosing Wisely recommendations. They followed by embedding the recommendations and then supporting them through existing systems.

#### 1) Measure so you know where to focus efforts.

When you let data guide decision-making, you know where to put limited resources. This becomes a big challenge with Choosing Wisely as there are currently no national measures that capture the clinical recommendations. This means that before implementing the recommendations, individual organizations immediately have to develop measure specifications with no standards to guide them.

**Choosing Wisely®** has 300 recommendations from 57 specialty medical societies who looked into their own field and identified unnecessary or wasteful procedures. The cornerstone of the Choosing Wisely campaign is to encourage conversations between providers and patients to determine care that is supported by evidence and where the benefits outweigh any harm.<sup>2</sup> Partnering in this effort, Consumer Reports has created 70 brochures, based on Choosing Wisely recommendations, intended to inform and empower patients.<sup>3</sup>

In Washington state, however, the Washington Health Alliance, the Washington State Medical Association and the Washington State Hospital Association collaborated to support the Washington State Choosing Wisely Task Force. The Task Force's first charge was to develop an initial set of measures, with the goal of reducing duplication of efforts and fostering collaboration among health organizations in the state. The Task Force developed 11 claims-based measure specifications, which were released in early 2014. The Alliance then applied these measures against its database (used to produce the Community Checkup); these results showing statewide performance will be published in the fall of 2014.<sup>4</sup>

The Rockwood Clinic is one of the 20 organizations represented on the Task Force, supporting and directing the Task Force's efforts. Leveraging the Task Force's measure specifications, the Rockwood Clinic modified the claims-based measures for its clinical electronic medical record system and currently has developed six measures. This allows Rockwood to see how it is doing on each recommendation, revealing which areas need additional focus.

**2) Embed into existing quality improvement culture instead of creating a new program.**

The Rockwood Clinic is making great strides in becoming a "health home" and providing comprehensive, continuity of care for their patients. This culture of quality improvement and medical team model helps them adapt to new recommendations. The Choosing Wisely recommendations are being incorporated into the existing quality program, just like HEDIS measures and other quality metrics. The Rockwood Clinic's quality program includes a quality dashboard, where the results will be refreshed monthly and transparently shared internally.

**3) Bolster with short and long term support systems.**

In every primary care clinic, and in a growing number of specialty clinics, Rockwood employs a health care coach who is tasked to improve the quality of care provided in that clinic location. Rockwood started using the health coach role five years ago at a single site. After demonstrating the program's success in continuously improving quality, it has since expanded the program across its other clinic locations. The health coaches use quality data results, good or bad, at each site to either recognize or provide support accordingly. The role of a health care coach is important for sustaining change because even when you know what needs to be done, follow through can be especially challenging in busy practice settings.

Once the modified Choosing Wisely measures have been fully tested for accuracy within Rockwood's practice, the measures will be included in its quality bonus program that offers pay-for-performance incentives. The quality incentives

**ROCKWOOD CLINIC'S  
PROCESS IN ADDING  
CHOOSING WISELY  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
INTO THEIR PRACTICE:**

- Commit
- Measure
- Embed
- Support

Once you have organizational commitment, measure so you know where to focus efforts, embed into existing programs and then bolster with short term and long term support systems.

program has been shown to improve outcomes for many measures but, as this includes individual provider-level results, the accuracy and availability of the data needs to be highly reliable. As Rockwood continues to measure and report on the new Choosing Wisely recommendations, it is able to explore potential questions about the measures' sensitivity and specificity. Rockwood plans to incorporate the measures into their incentive program in late 2015.

## CHALLENGES

- One challenge is the actionability of the Choosing Wisely recommendations. In other quality measures, the health coaches are often able to fill in gaps of care, such as calling diabetic patients for follow-up care. Choosing Wisely, on the other hand, requires education *before* care is delivered for informed decision-making. For example, you cannot un-do an unnecessary computerized tomography (CT) scan.
- Another challenge is reconciling Choosing Wisely recommendations (where doing less is better) with current fee-for-service payment models (where doing more is better, financially-speaking). This is why leadership needs to support decision-making based on what's right for the patient rather than what's best for the bottom line.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

- **Leadership.** Recognizing the importance of these new Choosing Wisely recommendations and making them a priority.
- **Responsiveness.** Being able to modify, build and report on the recommendations swiftly (Rockwood did this *within* weeks after the measure specifications were released).
- **Culture of improvement.** Having an existing quality structure in place to easily put the new recommendations into effect.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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## RESOURCES

1. **Rockwood Clinic:**  
[www.rockwoodclinic.com](http://www.rockwoodclinic.com)
2. **Choosing Wisely:**  
[www.choosingwisely.org](http://www.choosingwisely.org)
3. **Consumer Reports:**  
[www.consumerhealthchoices.org/campaigns/choosing-wisely](http://www.consumerhealthchoices.org/campaigns/choosing-wisely)
4. **Choosing Wisely Technical Specifications:**  
[www.wahealthalliance.org/alliance-reports-websites/choosing-wisely/washington-state-choosing-wisely-task-force/](http://www.wahealthalliance.org/alliance-reports-websites/choosing-wisely/washington-state-choosing-wisely-task-force/)

## ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

The Washington Health Alliance brings together those who give, get and pay for health care to create a high-quality, affordable system for the people of Washington state. The Alliance is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that shares the most reliable data on health care quality and value in the state to help providers, patients, employers and union trusts make better decisions about health care. Through innovative strategies and initiatives, we help the entire health care system—from exam room to board room—focus on improving quality and value. We are committed to being the catalyst for change for the health care system in Washington. The Alliance is one of 16 organizations that are part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) initiative.

[www.wahealthalliance.org](http://www.wahealthalliance.org) | [www.wacommunitycheckup.org](http://www.wacommunitycheckup.org)

## WANT TO RECOMMEND A PROGRAM FOR AN UPCOMING SPOTLIGHT?

Contact us!

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