



Healthy Practices. Healthy People. Healthy Places.

## Quality Improvement In Practice

# Improving Asthma Outcomes in America

## Improving the Quality of Adult Asthma Care in East Tennessee

### Asthma Management Challenges

East Tennessee faces many challenges with adult asthma management. Summit Medical Group (Summit), the largest organization providing primary care in the East Tennessee region, finds asthma management challenging due to inconsistent care from primary care physicians (PCPs), pulmonologists, and health coaches. Certain essentials to asthma care such as performing pulmonary function tests and educating patients on disease and medications are not well-coordinated and vary by provider. In addition to these challenges, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America ranks Knoxville as the second most challenging city in America for people with asthma to live. Therefore, with funding from AstraZeneca, the Public Health Foundation (PHF) selected Knoxville as the site of a quality improvement (QI) demonstration project.

Three teams from Summit Medical Group collaborated to improve the quality of adult asthma care.



### Applying Quality Improvement Tools

Under Summit leadership, three teams including the City of Knoxville, Statcare Pulmonary Consultants, and Tennessee Valley Primary Care, participated in a rapid Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle to improve the quality of asthma care delivered to adults.



#### PDCA Cycle

This cycle allows organizations to **PLAN** what they want to accomplish, **DO** what they plan, **CHECK** the results, and **ACT** on the results. This is a simple and powerful way to complete the QI process and analyze the effectiveness of improvement plans.

With assistance from PHF's QI Experts, each Summit team began the QI process by brainstorming system improvements and designing a roadmap to help them implement these improvements. Each team addressed the same central goal, but did so in their own unique way and had different outcomes and different measures of success.

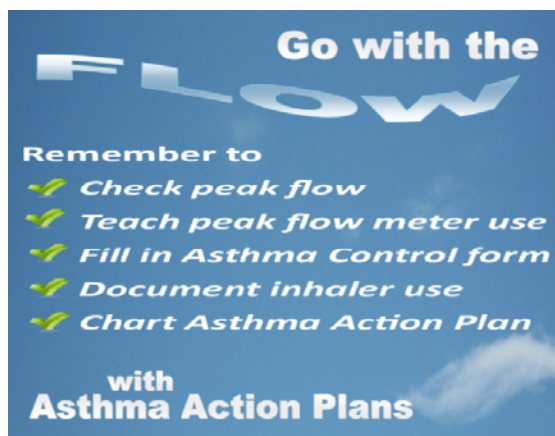
The QI tools and methods helped the teams **streamline operations, improve documentation of quality measures, and enhance communication** between the health care teams that interact with patients with asthma.

Project funding provided by AstraZeneca.

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## City of Knoxville (COK)

The COK team aimed to create a best practice model for the treatment of asthma in the corporate wellness area by integrating it with primary care practice and pulmonology practice. The team created a care management plan for their health coaching program to increase patient education and to improve documentation. Additionally, COK redesigned the employee benefits structure to encourage greater participation in the asthma health coaching program than in prior years. COK plans to apply lessons learned from this new integrated care model and apply them to how they support the management of the other eight chronic disease areas.



## Statcare Pulmonary Consultants (Statcare)

The Statcare team aimed to establish a consistent workflow for physicians to follow for each patient visit. After surveying patients and reviewing patient charts, the team decided that the workflow required additional steps and be completed before the physician entered the examination room. The new workflow was integrated into practice through an educational campaign titled *Go with the Flow*. Some physicians now schedule patients to meet with a nurse practitioner for an educational visit before each appointment with the doctor. Statcare plans to apply the concepts to other areas of the clinic and expand the practice to the pulmonology group clinics.

## Tennessee Valley Primary Care (TVPC)

The TVPC team aimed to redesign the physician-patient workflow to be more timely and efficient, and concentrated their efforts in one patient care area. By surveying patients and reviewing patient charts, TVPC identified the need for a partnership between various asthma care providers to optimize asthma self-management. Through a team approach to treatment, patients have many opportunities to report symptoms, discuss concerns, and share their perceived control of their asthma symptoms. The increased dialogue fosters self-confidence in self-monitoring and implementing asthma management plans. TVPC anticipates that the new workflow system will reduce urgent care visits and hospitalizations.

### Future Vision

The rapid cycle improvement process opened a dialogue between the Summit pulmonologists and PCPs to establish a seamless patient referral system. Summit anticipates that this project will lead to improved asthma outcomes, including reduction in urgent care visits and hospitalizations, and improved health outcomes and quality of life for asthma patients.

The future goal is to implement and continually evaluate effective measures in other Summit clinics and to assure quality measures are being maintained.

*PHF worked with four teams in the Knoxville, Tennessee area to achieve improvements in the management and control of asthma through use of QI tools and methods in process improvement. The full report and related resources are available on the PHF website at [www.phf.org/asthma](http://www.phf.org/asthma).*

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