



OntarioMD Success Story: **Improving EMR efficiency for better population-based care**

THE CHALLENGE

Electronic medical records (EMRs) have the power to help primary care providers improve patient outcomes through better population-based care. But an EMR's ability to identify and effectively track target patient populations relies on the quality and accuracy of the patient data entered by the clinician.

Dr. Alireza Oliaei, a family physician in the Toronto area, contacted OntarioMD's EMR Practice Enhancement Program (EPEP) team in spring 2016. At that point, he had been in practice for eight years, and had been using his EMR for four years. Dr. Oliaei was particularly interested in focusing on preventive population-based care. He also wanted to better target his patients who need cancer screening, as well as his diabetic population. However, he explained to his EPEP practice advisor that he was spending a significant amount of time searching for relevant records such as lab tests and exams, and he was frequently faced with unexpected pop-up reminders during patient visits. He was also worried about discrepancies between what he knew his patient roster to be and what he was seeing on his enrolled patient lists from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

BACKGROUND

OntarioMD is a trusted advisor to physicians, uniquely positioned to help practices realize more clinical value from their EMRs through a range of tools and support services. EPEP analyzes practices' EMR workflow and data quality, and provides hands-on support to help clinicians move beyond data capture to use their EMR to improve patient care and practice efficiency. EPEP has helped over 500 physicians optimize their EMR use since the program's launch in 2016, using a proven five-step process that involves a gap analysis, workflow analysis and mapping, review of EMR data quality against a variety of key clinical measures, the creation of a customized action plan with achievable tasks, and evaluation to measure post-engagement improvements.

HOW THE EPEP TEAM HELPED

The EPEP practice advisor began working with Dr. Oliaei by conducting a gap analysis that looked at his concerns from a process, technology and people perspective. In addition, a data quality review was done to analyze whether data was being entered into the EMR accurately and in a consistent manner.

The data quality review revealed that less than half of the target patient population was being screened consistently. There was also a 44% discrepancy between the number of patients with a diabetes diagnosis recorded in the problem list and the number billed for diabetic visits. In addition, a workflow analysis showed that records were being manually entered in the chart note section rather than using the EMR's diabetic flowsheet feature, due to a technical issue with lab results not being imported directly into the EMR. It's important to note that these findings don't necessarily reflect the quality of care provided, but simply indicate EMR data quality and documentation issues.

A month after the EPEP practice advisor's initial meeting with Dr. Oliaei, findings and the following action items were presented for the doctor's consideration:

- Contact the EMR vendor to address technical issues with importation of lab results.
- Adopt consistent terms for EMR data entry, to ensure accuracy of reminders and reports.
- Adopt a population-based approach by periodically running reports to target patients due for screening or diabetic follow-ups, and a cumulative preventive care report.
- Record diagnoses in the problem list section, particularly for chronic conditions such as diabetes.
- Review rules in the EMR's reminder section, delete unnecessary reminders, and add required ones.
- Use the pending test function to log and track requisitions.

Dr. Oliaei found most of the recommendations useful, and agreed to incorporate them according to the timelines suggested by the practice advisor. The table to the right indicates improvements measured across four data quality indicators following Dr. Oliaei's engagement with the EPEP team.

Dr. Oliaei says he feels more efficient since his work with the EPEP team, and he's now more comfortable with the accuracy of his EMR data and reminders. Just as important, he believes his patients are more satisfied that their doctor is closely monitoring their health status. With increased confidence in his patient data, Dr. Oliaei has signed an agreement with a third-party provider for nutrition consultations and diabetic education to ensure his diabetic patients are receiving optimal care.

Data Quality Indicator	Post-EPEP Engagement Improvement
Cervical screening (per 12-month period)	22%
Problem list error rate (Diabetes)	37%
Patients with high HbA1C while no Dx	9%
Diabetes follow-up visits (per quarter)	10x

"I found the EPEP process very helpful and valuable to us. From the beginning, we were coached how to implement the process and we were not left alone."

Dr. Alireza Oliaei, Family Physician, Toronto

Contact

If you'd like to find out more about how you can work with an OntarioMD EMR Practice Enhancement Program advisor to create an EMR enhancement plan that reflects your unique practice priorities, please contact the OntarioMD EPEP team at epep@ontariomd.com or **1-866-339-1233**.

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