



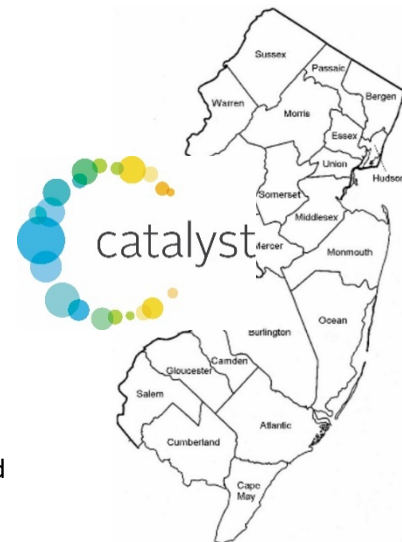
New Jersey Innovation Catalyst Initiative Case Story

CompleteCare Health Network's Pathways to Wellness: Optimizing Community Outcomes



CompleteCare designed a patient-centered and streamlined pathway for staff and patients to follow to ensure that patients receive important testing and are given their results in a timely and sensitive manner all with the ultimate goal of providing high quality, preventive care that results in optimal outcomes. The innovation team coined this process *Pathways to Wellness* to underscore the creation of a clear path for patients and staff to navigate health directives and simplify the care pathway in what is typically a complex and overwhelming healthcare environment for both patients and staff.

The team's first pathway was to better facilitate follow-up and improve communication with patients who received mammograms. Each year, CompleteCare's providers order about 20,000 mammograms at their 20 clinics in Cumberland, Gloucester and Cape May Counties in southern New Jersey. Given the changing guidelines in referring women for mammography, the importance of timely follow up, and the fear that can often be associated with receipt of a letter indicating there is "something abnormal", the innovation team aimed to personalize the process, involve patient navigators, and reduce the need for women to report to the clinic to hear results that do not require immediate action. The innovation team acknowledged that their process for mammograms was cumbersome and caused an increase in the time to diagnostic resolution in addition to unnecessary anxiety for patients. As the Network grew and patient volume increased, the care process became more and more inefficient, making it more difficult for patients to navigate the system. In addition, staff involved in the process rarely spoke face-to-face and the care team's approach of mailing letters to patients with vague information was inefficient and expensive. Additionally, patients felt confused and anxious and often times did not know who to turn to have their questions answered.



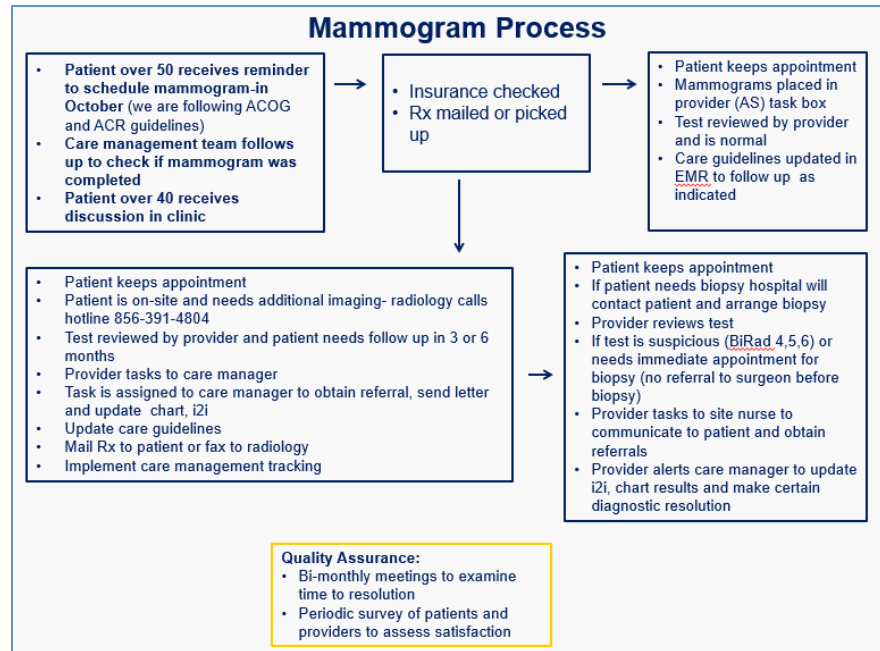
At the start of the project, the innovation team had no documentation of how many women follow-up with testing or what the incidence of breast cancer was in their patient population. The team brought together a variety of individuals from across the organization, some of whom had never spoken face-to-face or sat down in a room together prior to this project. The innovation team used story boards and journey mapping, convened and gathered information from their patient focus groups, and asked super

users to give them feedback about their current care pathway. The team also worked with their external partners (radiology providers and breast surgeons) to develop a program that was more patient-centric—essentially focusing on developing a navigator concept where the team developed tiered levels of intervention for patients with varying levels of risk. The team wanted to be sure that their patients knew why mammograms were important, set up a process whereby women who came to their centers for preventive visits were getting mammograms ordered, and received information about the results. If the result was abnormal, patients received some form of personalized communication about what needed to be done next.

The innovation team developed a number of approaches to make their care pathway more efficient and also implemented a process to track their data more effectively (see figure). For

example, the team worked with their navigator to reach patients who could not be contacted during the day and created a more inclusive feedback loop so more members of the care team knew what was going on with their patients. Other changes included revising and streamlining the letters that are sent reminding people of their appointments for screening, focusing on a target age group of 50-74; appointing a nurse practitioner to be sure that individuals with borderline or suspicious results were being followed in a timely and appropriate manner; streamlining the process for writing prescriptions for follow-up tests, partnering with their local hospital to streamline referrals to an accredited breast cancer specialist and reduce the need for patients to return for tests that can be done on the same day (e.g., additional imaging views, ultrasound); training care managers to be alert to the need for cancer prevention screening in the patients they are following for other conditions; and exploring the use of their EMR integrated text and email technology to inform patients of mammograms (and other preventive screenings).

Not only was the innovation team successful in streamlining and refining



“Our project focused on the fact that we recognized that women in our communities are at high risk for having adverse outcomes related to breast cancer and that half of our community that we take care of are women and that we really had a very clunky and cumbersome process for connecting women with their needed services. As part of the Catalyst program we were challenged to find more patient-centric ways in which we approach these concerns.”

**—Sandra E. Brooks, MD, Chief Medical Officer
CompleteCare Health Network**

its care pathway, it also was able to document positive changes that resulted from the new pathway. Over the course of the project, the percentage of mammograms completed increased from about 25% of those ordered to about 34%. The team attributed this increase to the personalized follow-up. The innovation team also cut the time to diagnostic resolution in half (measured from the time the mammogram is done to the time that any additional follow-up is completed), down from 30 to 15 days. Over the timeframe, seven patients with cancer were found among the women screened; according to CompleteCare staff, this is higher than the detection rate of the general population.

Overall the innovation team felt that the entire experience has been very valuable and is considering using this model as a template to tackle some of their other issues. The team would like to continue and expand the program by seeking additional funding sources to support patient navigation, education, follow-up, and population-based health efforts. The care team is also working with a mobile mammography van to provide greater access for their patients.

