



portland ipa

GRANT SPOTLIGHT



As a means of bringing attention to the innovative work done by our providers, the Portland IPA presents to you a new series of Grant Spotlights. This monthly feature will shine a light on the vision behind the Portland IPA-sponsored grant projects and explore the learnings gained through trial and tribulation, and most importantly, the outcomes associated with the work. We hope to gain a greater understanding of why some projects work out (and others do not) and how successful implementation of work supported by our grant program has led to changes in the effective delivery of high-quality care.

*Tom Gragnola, MD
Portland IPA Medical Director*

Our first grant spotlight is on Dr. Xiaoyan Huang, cardiologist and Medical Director of General Cardiology at Providence Heart Clinic (PHC). She has served as a physician champion and driving force behind several grant projects over the last five years. According to Dr. Huang, often front-line physicians, advanced practice providers, and staff have innovative ideas to improve clinical care or operational efficiency. Yet, because of the lack of funding support to fully develop and test them out in practice, these ideas fall at the wayside. Providers patch things up and continue with “workarounds” day in and day out, resulting in a vicious cycle of built-in inefficiency, a sense of learned helplessness, frustration, and burn-out. According to Dr. Huang, the Portland IPA Grant Program has allowed her team to develop project ideas with clear goals, action steps, and measurable outcomes to address operational challenges. For busy clinicians, the grant program structure and seed funding are critical in providing motivation and support for teams to pause, fix the root cause of problems, and move on, breaking the vicious cycle of patch up and workarounds.

Dr. Huang's team has focused on sustainable projects to take them beyond the initial solution for operational challenges to workflows that become standardized in the practice setting. More importantly, these IPA-funded projects helped the PHC team to build a culture of leading change, the ability to identify problems, design and implement solutions, and ultimately spread best practices within Providence Heart Clinic and beyond. Recently I caught up with Dr. Huang to talk about her grant experiences.



PROVIDENCE
Heart Institute



Xiaoyan Huang, MD

Grant Year 2017

Project: Care Compacts and Agreements Between Cardiology and Primary Care Clinics

In 2013, with close support from Portland IPA, PHC at Gateway became the first National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) recognized Patient-Centered Specialty Practice (PCSP) in the United States. Over the next four years, PHC spread the best practices across all clinic sites for PHC in Oregon to meet NCQA standards. Care coordination and building the “medical neighborhood” are vital elements of the PCSP work. The grant project provided opportunities to collaborate, and there were challenges to overcome, particularly finding ways to communicate with physicians that work in different electronic medical records. Tracking referrals, triaging of patients, and referral loop closure were key elements of the grant. Over time, improved communication built relationships and trust between PHC providers and primary care providers (PCPs). When cardiologic conditions stabilized, cardiologists could send patients back to their PCPs. This reduced unnecessary, duplicative care and improved efficiency for the specialists.

Grant Year 2020

Project: Dissemination of the Providence Heart Now App



PHC developed a cell phone app called Providence Heart Now for referring providers. This grant supported an effort to help disseminate the Providence Heart Now App, which provides an easy option for providers to refer patients, access practice guidelines, and communicate with cardiologists in an electronic, phone-friendly format.

Although the development and execution were successful, the use of the app has been less than the team would have hoped. However, it led to an analysis and greater understanding of how primary care providers tend to communicate and why adoption of an app was limited for many PCPs in an already overwhelming universe of electronic communications.

Project: E-Consults



This grant assisted in the development of an electronic consultation process, allowing primary care providers to ask key clinical questions about patient cardiac issues. It allowed cardiologists to triage patients, see some patients more quickly, and for others, guide evidence-based diagnostic evaluation in preparation for consultation.

Eventually, within the EPIC electronic record, workflows were developed, allowing PCPs to communicate and get timely guidance. Initial concerns about losing referrals (and ultimately business) never materialized, and as cardiologists and PCPs became more comfortable using this option, appropriate referrals increased, and redundant care decreased.