

# FOR PATIENT CENTERED PRIMARY CARE...

*Partner With Your Patients*

Founded in January 2016 by Dr. Ryan Kauffman, **Hickory Medical Direct Primary Care**, located in rural Ohio, represents a return to the no-frills model of the local family doctor with his black bag, making house calls and providing comprehensive care for his patients. With 30-minute appointments and a building layout where the waiting room has an open window into Kauffman's office, patient engagement is something that is encouraged and occurs organically within every visit.

## What was the issue?

Given that this is a direct primary model where patients are paying members, Dr. Kauffman encourages his patients to have as much input as possible. With a panel of 900 patients, Kauffman and his team try to maintain regular communication with his entire panel. Because he wants to give patients ownership in the practice and in their health care, practice updates are sent every other month via email. The practice staff, wanting to formalize communication and promote the practice, wanted to switch communication away from email and to a newsletter.

## How did they engage their patients?

Due to the intimate nature of having a solo practice with a more manageable panel size, Dr. Kauffman and his team are able to maintain regular communication with all of his patients through personalized emails. These emails contain practice-level announcements, such as when flu shots are available, and also serve as a way for patients to directly communicate with the practice whenever they like. For example, in a recent email sent out to the entire practice, Dr. Kauffman and his team received over 40 replies. "My office manager or myself reply directly," Kauffman explains, "[We] have a constant chain of conversation going to keep them involved and hear what they have to say."

### PRACTICE PROFILE

**Name:** Hickory Medical DPC

**Practice type:** Direct Primary Care/Rural Independent Practice

**PCMH recognition:** none

**Location:** Bellefontaine, OH

**Primary Care Provider**

**Staffing:** 1 MD

**Number of Patients:** 900

**Patient demographics:**

Uninsured, mostly underserved populations

**Level of patient engagement:** Organizational Design

**Notable highlight:** Solo practitioner, regular email updates to patients, Patient Ambassador Program

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In addition to the ongoing conversations that occur, this practice also has Patient Ambassadors, who meet regularly and serve as thought partners in brainstorming ways to improve the practice or to better engage patients. Patient Ambassadors serve as an additional reinforcement to help the practice align with the needs of the patients are.

In talking about communication strategies, it became clear that patients really enjoyed the emails and were not on board with the potential switch to formal newsletters.

### What was the result?

Although the practice staff had been hoping to formalize communication and move towards a newsletter format, as a result of the personal touch that the patients wanted to maintain, practice updates are still sent via email. This serves as an example of how staff may have a different perspective on patient needs, and asking patient advisors directly can provide helpful insights.

“Every decision we look at, we try to get patient input,” Kauffman adds. “We try to align our practice style with what they need.”

### What advice do they have for others?

“Start, learn, do something different,” says Kauffman. “As health care professionals we get

too used to the one side of the picture... [We] learn incredible amount from the patients.”

### How can I learn more?

Visit their website: <http://www.hickorydpc.com/>

For additional resources on how to involve patients as advisors in your practice, visit: <http://cepc.ucsf.edu/patients-transformation-partners>

### Other resources:

Institute for Patient and Family Centered Care: <http://www.ipfcc.org/>

### Thanks for the case study to...

Dr. Ryan Kauffman, Founder of Hickory Medical Direct Primary Care



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