

# FOR PATIENT CENTERED PRIMARY CARE...

## Partner With Your Patients

Over the span of four short years, **St. Michael's Hospital Academic** Family Health Team in Toronto has gone from having limited experience with patient engagement to becoming a leader inspiring others to promote practice-level patient engagement.

### What was the issue?

A 2013 mandate requiring family health centers across Ontario to create a quality improvement plan meant that St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team had to quickly develop a process for sustainably measuring and improving the patient experience. Previous attempts to measure patient experience through a waiting room survey were resource intensive and sporadic.

### How did they engage their patients?

In 2014, the group launched their on-line patient experience survey, emailed to all patients during their birth month to ensure a randomly distributed sample of their patient population. Questions focused on access, continuity, and patient centeredness. There were also two open-ended questions -- these provided insight into which areas needed improvement but also became a way for the team to hear from patients about what was going well.

Wanting to take an even deeper dive, the team set their sights on hosting a Patient Engagement Day. The team advertised the event in their waiting rooms and sent an email invitation to 10,000 patients. They were blown away when 350 volunteered! The team wanted to ensure participants for the day were representative of the practice so randomly selected 36 patients to attend based on age, gender, housing, and self-reported health. Patient volunteers who attended the Patient Engagement Day were asked how the team could improve the typical medical visit. Volunteers were provided an orientation to the team's work then identified pain points and brainstormed practical recommendations for improvement.

### PRACTICE PROFILE

**Name:** St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team in Toronto

**Practice type:** Urban academic site

**PCMH recognition:** N/A

**Location:** Toronto, Canada

**Primary Care Provider Staffing:**

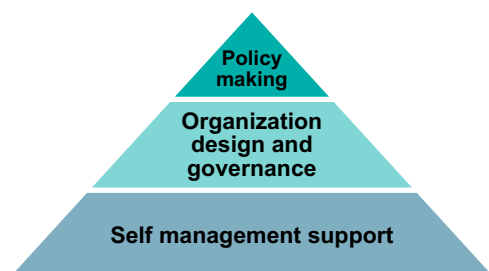
74 staff physicians, 40 family medicine residents

**Patient visits/year:** 42,000 patients

**Patient demographics:**  
Diverse; professional, young families, low income, immigrant, refugees

**Level of patient engagement:**  
Organizational design

**Notable highlight:**  
Representative recruitment strategy, One-time patient engagement day



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### What was the result?

The Patient Engagement Day far exceeded expectations, energizing both patients and staff. Patients shared thoughtful recommendations and helped bring attention to items previously unbeknownst to the team, such as concerns over privacy regarding the Plexiglass around the registration desk in the waiting room or not understanding why resident physicians would suddenly leave the room during an appointment (to consult with attending physicians). To this day, the Family Health Team is committed to addressing the recommendations generated from the Patient Engagement Day, already having tackled more than half of the suggestions. Beyond the list of recommendations, the Patient Engagement Day helped demonstrate the value of engaging patients in improvement efforts, even if for a day.

### What advice do they have for others?

This practice recommends just trying something without worrying about it being perfect. Patient engagement can seem intimidating at the beginning, but it is a learning process. This practice suggests being deliberate about hearing from diverse patient groups and ensuring you take the time to orient patient advisors early in the process. Be clear with patients about what you can and cannot commit to and keep them in the loop around changes you have made based on their feedback.

"Many people jump into patient advisory committees and they may not always be ready for that," Dr. Kiran adds. "People don't need to start there. Even bringing patients together for a day is great and it was great for our team."

### How can I learn more?

Learn more about St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team in Toronto at:

<http://www.stmichaelshospital.com/programs/familypractice/index.php>

To read more about this innovative patient engagement day, read this article at:

<http://www.annfammed.org/content/16/2/175.full.pdf+html>

For additional resources on how to involve patients as advisors in your practice, visit:

<http://cepc.ucsf.edu/patients-transformation-partners>

or watch our patient engagement webinar series featuring Dr. Kiran's work:

<https://www.careinnovations.org/resources/patient-engagement-series-innovative-models-of-patient-engagement/>

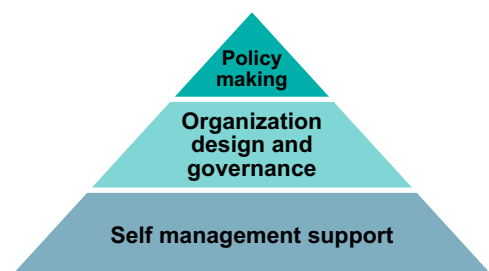
### Other resources:

To read more about some of the quality improvement events:

<http://www.hqontario.ca/Blog/ArtMID/30956/ArticleID/80/CategoryID/15/CategoryName/Primary-Care/Involving-Patients-to-Improve-Primary-Care>

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

Dr. Tara Kiran, Director of Quality of Improvement at St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team in Toronto



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