



June 2019

NRACC Exemplary Practice Profile: Sound Health Care Center



Joining the Transforming Clinical Practice Initiative in June 2016 was a no-brainer for Sound Health Care Center. We were able to learn specific steps we could take to make a real difference to our patient population. Our results have been beyond what we could have hoped. For example, we've been able to improve the number of patients controlling their high blood pressure from 19.2% to 70.%. This is the kind of change that makes a huge impact on the health and day-to-day lives of the people in our community.

About the Practice

Sound Health Care Center is located in Port Orchard, Washington, in south Kitsap County. This is [one of the healthier counties](#) in Washington.

While we are just 13 miles as the crow flies from Seattle, we are situated on a piece of land that juts out into the Puget Sound. As a result, it takes about an hour to get to Seattle, whether you drive or take the ferry. This creates a pretty unique kind of town – parts feel very suburban, while others feel very rural. We also have three naval bases and a naval shipyard in our county, which regularly brings in new people from all over the country.

Our practice is relatively small. We have one physician, Dr. Brad Frandsen, M.D., who has been practicing in Port Orchard for 25 years. He's helped by one nurse practitioner and two physician assistants. We have approximately 6,000 active patients, roughly a third of whom are on Medicare.

The Transformation Process

Because we are a small practice, we knew we needed all the help we could get to improve how we did business. After starting to work with TCPI, we participated in every webinar and accepted every offer of assistance that came our way. We also attended many workshops and used regular calls with our adviser at National Rural Accountable Care Consortium to stay on track.

The first thing we needed to overhaul was the way we used our electronic health records. We went through rounds of training and had a lot of back and forth with our software vendor, but we finally got to a point where we were reporting all of the good work we were doing. This enabled

us to see important data trends and generate useful reports. If we were going to do preventive work like screening for falls and administering pneumonia vaccines, we wanted to make sure we saw the impact on our patients.

Beyond that, the biggest shift we made was becoming proactive instead of mostly reactive with our patients' health needs. We started reaching out to our patients who had recently been hospitalized, rather than waiting for them to call us. We began tracking referrals and following up with our patients if they didn't see the specialist. If a patient's blood pressure was high during an office visit, we began reaching out to get them back for a follow-up appointment in a timely manner.

Doing more Annual Wellness Visits turned out to be key to improving many of our screening quality measures. Before, if a patient was coming in for a chronic condition every three to six months, we would often forget to focus on preventive care, as well. We learned those are the patients who might benefit the most from certain screenings.

We now tell all of our patients they need an AWW, regardless of how often they come in for their chronic conditions. We send out reminders via mail, email or by phone to explain the importance of these visits. We also have an internal policy that if someone's insurance doesn't cover an AWW and they complain about the cost, we write it off. That's how important we feel they are.

One of the best things we did was work on improving communication with our patients. Even the simplest thing, like making sure they know we have same day appointments available, has helped us dramatically cut unnecessary hospitalizations and save \$589,432 since joining TCPI. We didn't know it, but our patients were just assuming we didn't have any available appointments, which just wasn't true. We've now become the first point of contact when they need urgent care. And because urgent care centers are billed as ER visits in our community, this is saving our patients a lot of money.

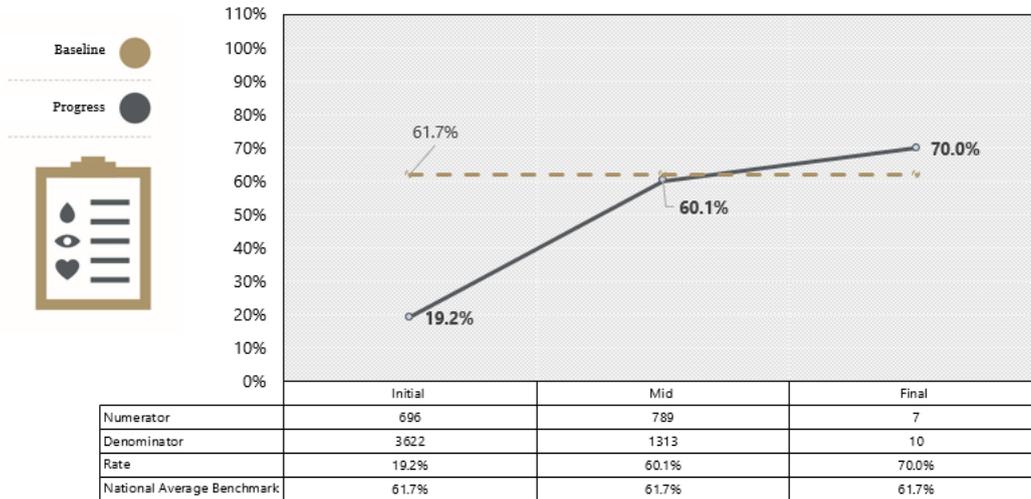
Lastly, we needed to ensure all the changes we were making stayed fresh in our staff's minds. There's so much for everyone in our office to worry about, so it's easy to slip into old habits. We started having regular staff meetings to go over what we're doing and get feedback on how things are going. This way we can keep bringing up the importance of our changes – something that's really made a difference in elevating how we operate.

Providing Patient-Centered Care

With AWWs happening more regularly, we've seen a big leap in a lot of important health measures. In addition to the jump in patients controlling their high blood pressure, we have also improved our depression screening rate from 32.8% to 55.8%, resulting in a cost savings of \$1,120,355 since joining TCPI. We've also seen slight increases in rates of pneumonia vaccines and colorectal cancer screenings thanks to those preventive care visits.

SOUND HEALTH CARE CENTER

Documentation of controlling high blood pressure since baseline



Documentation of depression screening since baseline

