

Beyond *THE* clinic

Leaders at the Bloomington-based Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI) were already part of a growing chorus calling for health care to address the social determinants of health when the Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) Foundation came calling a couple of years ago. The foundation wanted ICSI to help clinicians work with others in the community on nonmedical influences that had the biggest effect on people's health.

ICSI president and CEO Sanne Magnan, MD, had long championed the idea that health care organizations needed to do so if population health were to improve and health care costs come down. But what RWJ wanted was for ICSI to come up with practical guidance for doing that. "They said, 'Make it really simple and tell stories about how doctors, nurses and administrators can be more effective,'" Magnan says.

With \$150,000 from RWJ, ICSI launched "Going Beyond Clinical Walls" in 2014. As part of the effort, they've produced a white paper making the case for integrating health care and community resources, compiled stories about how others have done it, co-produced a video with Twin Cities Public Television to inspire conversation and created a step-by-step guide for clinics and hospitals wanting to get to work.

What might going beyond clinical walls entail? That depends on the community. One Seattle clinic partnered with a swimming pool in the neighborhood and now refers kids for lessons to ensure they develop life-saving skills and get active. In Woodbury, a health system teamed up with churches to provide diabetes education. In Minneapolis, a pediatric clinic works with a literacy organization and gives out books to kids.

Resources for clinicians

The Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement has created a series of tools to help clinicians, clinical staff and administrators connect with community partners. They include:

- A white paper on solving complex problems
- A video, "Hats Matter"
- Real-life examples
- A guide to getting started

All can be found at www.icsi.org/beyondclinicalwalls.

Family physician Tim Hernandez, MD, who attended a session on Going Beyond Clinical Walls at last year's ICSI colloquium, says the time is right for this kind of initiative. For one thing, it has been becoming clearer to physicians that they can affect only a small portion of their patients' health. "As we've worked hard on



An image from the video "Hats Matter," which talks about the role physicians, patients and the entire community can play in improving health.

the more technical aspects of disease management with medicine and procedures, we've realized we can only get so far," he says, noting that working on smoking cessation, weight loss, and providing access to healthier food and places to exercise often have a larger impact on health than health care.

As medical director for quality for the 12 Entira Family Clinics in the Twin Cities, Hernandez also says the time is right because the payer community and government are pushing clinicians to be more accountable for the communities they serve. "The metrics are changing to population metrics," he says. "And the rewards, especially with arrangements with payers to lower total costs and improve the quality of the health for the communities that we serve, are aligning in a way to support those systems that can do this well."

Both Magnan and Hernandez say that if Going Beyond Clinical Walls is done right, clinicians as well as patients will benefit. "It's about finding ways to make connections that help clinicians be more effective, make their jobs easier, and make their patients' and families' lives better," Magnan says. "We've got to find creative ways to do that."

Going Beyond Clinical Walls appears to be attracting interest. The website has had more than 1,200 hits so far. "That's more than what we get for other initiatives," Magnan says.

— CARMEN PEOTA