

BRIEFING NOTE

Topic/Issue: 2021-22 Quality Priorities and Plan

Background:

Each year at Unity Health, we set out a number of key corporate quality priorities that form the basis of our Quality Plan. Traditionally, the quality plan has encompassed the required elements from the Health Quality Ontario Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) as well as other Unity defined areas of focus. In 2020/21 the framework for the plan was based on three pillars: Quality Today, Quality Tomorrow and Care Experience. Areas of focus included ongoing improvements in Emergency Department wait times, reporting of workplace violence incidents and two initiatives within long term care: reduction of pressure injuries and antipsychotic medication ordering.

Over the past few months the Unity team has been assessing our overall progress and approach to the annual quality planning cycle. The following brief outlines our aspirations, a high level assessment of our current challenges and opportunities, a renewed approach to planning and the proposed draft priorities for 21/22.

Our Aspiration for 2021-2024

Over the next three years we see an opportunity to further hardwire a quality and continuous improvement culture into all of our programs and services. If successful, our quality culture will be evident through the following:

- Patients, staff, physicians and learners **know** that the quality of care provided at Unity Health is excellent.
- The experience of patients is assessed routinely, across the organization, and the information is used in near real-time to improve care
- The role of patient and family partners is clearly defined and their involvement throughout the organization is evidenced in program quality councils, improvement priorities/initiatives and the corporate council and committee structure. All staff (clinical & non-clinical) are confident in their ability to meaningful engage and work side by side with patient and family partners
- We have produced and contributed to the national and international academic/research in QI and patient experience
- There is a consistent approach to monitoring and improving the quality of care across the organization – the Unity Quality Management System
- The Care Experience Institute is a visible manifestation of how this aspiration is being realized, both internally and externally

Current State Challenges

In order to understand how best to move towards our vision for quality at Unity Health, we reflected on the current state limitations/constraints in our current structures. The following section outlines some considerations:

- Staff and physicians **believe** that the quality of care provided at Unity Health is very good, and feedback from patients is mostly positive. However, in the wave of a complex merger and in the middle of an unprecedented pandemic, it is probably fair to say that we do not yet have a unified, coherent, appropriately resourced approach to monitoring and improving the quality of care and the care experience.
- The strategic vision of “best care experiences, created together” is aspirational, but we do not assess patient experiences across the organization in a way that would allow us to be confident that we are continually improving the care experience.
- We are increasingly partnering with patients and families, but could do this more broadly and deeply.
- In many areas, physicians, nurses and other health care professionals work together in high-functioning inter-professional teams, but our newly formed professional practice teams and our physician community of practice for quality improvement are not as well connected to the overall quality agenda as they could be.
- We have many learners who are keen to learn about quality improvement and participate in quality improvement, but it can be challenging to integrate them into initiatives, in part because of the distributed nature of learning across the city
- Scholarly activity related to quality has primarily been physician driven; there is opportunity to broaden Unity Health’s profile and represent successes both internally and externally

Current State Opportunities

Building towards our vision for the “hardwiring” of quality, there are many strengths across all our care settings that can be leveraged. These include:

- We have highly engaged and motivated teams with pockets of excellence with local QI skills and leadership across all care settings. Furthermore, there is a cadre of physicians, nurses, health professionals with academic preparation in Quality and Improvement
- Our patient and family partner program continues to mature and grow, with over 120 patient and family partners actively partnering with our teams across a variety of projects and settings.
- We have the benefit of the Advanced Analytics team with demonstrated pilot projects that we want to further embed into our Quality work
- COVID-19 has disrupted the “norm”, creating opportunities for innovation and enhanced collaboration
- Planning for the new EPR also provides a focus for understanding how this transformation can enable “hard wiring” quality at the bedside

Planning Assumptions and Constraints

Our planning has been done in concert with the work on the overall Unity strategic goals; with a three year focus and specific goals and targets for 21/22. Of our 8 dimensions, this quality plan will fundamentally focus on improving Access, Safety and Patient Centredness as these are foundational to the best care experience.

Ontario Health, Quality division (formerly HQO) has indicated that it will not be issuing directive guidance for the annual QIP for 2021/22 as a recognition of the strain of the COVID-19 pandemic on health system teams. Hospitals do continue to have a legal obligation to produce a QIP, but will have wide latitude as to its contents. We too, have also considered the impact of the pandemic on our teams and therefore developed a plan that leverages work underway and incorporates a high degree of support for the local clinical teams.

The 2021/22 Quality Plan

The Quality Plan is documented in the *accompanying* power point deck which will serve as a platform for dialogue and engagement with the Board Quality committee. A few points to note:

- A high degree of effort will be placed on the strategy to design and implement experience measurement as an enabler to this and the other aspects of our Unity strategy. The development of a measurement framework is also one of the overall strategic goals for the organization. A detailed brief that outlines the approach to this work is included in the meeting package and will be a standalone item for review at our upcoming meeting
- In partnership with our patient and family partners we will continue to enrich our Patient and Family Partner program, expanding the role of the partners and further integrating the patient voice throughout Unity Health
- In 2021/22 a heavy focus will be on preparing for Accreditation. We will leverage this as a platform to implement some of the early components of our quality infrastructure and capacity building including establishing quality councils within programs and cascading high level metrics
- The primary focus for continuous improvement remains Access to Care. The focus in acute care will continue to be on the flow between the emergency department and the hospital.