



A key component in evaluating the success and benefits of patient medical homes involves collecting stories of health care change from doctors, patients, and allied care providers. These stories take readers on a journey toward understanding how patient medical homes are improving care around the province.

Change Snapshot: How the PMH innovation improved physician work-life balance.

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Supported Physician Translates to Better Patient Care

As a family doctor in BC, there are ever increasing demands on my time and skills. Patients are more complex, they demand more, and my office gets multiple calls daily from community members looking for a doctor. I spend a many hours before and after my clinic doing work. I often get behind when seeing patients, because complex problems take time and sometimes they need to be dealt with immediately. Physician burnout is being talked about with the increased demands on physicians; I listen to the stories with great interest.

When I was offered the opportunity to participate in the Nurse in Practice initiative, I saw it as an opportunity to work with a team, to allow me to focus on the things that only I can do. For example, the nurse could spend time with patients to discuss lifestyle and chronic disease management, provide education and help connect them with community resources. Traditionally physicians perform these tasks, which can be time consuming during clinic time. I thought that, as a team, we could each work to maximize our individual skills and provide a more efficient and holistic environment for our patients.

When we first started, the nurse didn't know what happened a doctor's office and I didn't appreciate what she could do as a nurse. I had mostly observed nurses in the hospital, and was not aware of what nurses could do beyond that. I have learned that nurses are trained to be communicators and educators. This aligned with my goals for changes I wanted to make in my office, to provide additional education to patients to empower them to manage their health. As I started working with the nurse, I realized that our skills are different and complementary. Due to our different training, we have different perspectives; I have a more medical perspective while the nurse can provide detailed education and support about a wide range of medical conditions.

We are six months into our Nurse in Practice experience; we are seeing more patients and providing better care. For the first two months, the nurse shadowed the physicians in our practice, and in that time, we learned how we each worked, and how we could work together as a team. We would be talking about the arthritis in a patient's knee, and I'd offer an x-ray and some physiotherapy. Our nurse added value to that, by spending time explaining exercises for strengthening, lifestyle changes to help manage arthritis and offering follow up by phone or in person. The patient received more comprehensive health education, and I could move on to see the next patient in the office. I feel better, knowing I'm not rushed in an explanation with a patient, and I'm not behind with other patients.

The most significant change for me since starting to work with a Nurse in Practice is that my work life balance has substantially improved. I spend fewer hours working at home. I'm able better meet the demand to see people in a more timely fashion when they're sick, and the nurse can even assist with illness assessment for urgent problems when my schedule is already full. I feel like feel like my patients



are getting more comprehensive and timely medical care. The patients have told us that they appreciate being able to sit down with the nurse and talk about things without time pressure.

This change is significant to me because I was worried about burnout, trying to meet the needs of my patients on a daily basis while trying to balance that with my own well-being. This team-based approach to family practice translates to better patient care when the physician is supported. The Nurse in Practice has created an environment that allows me to do what I'm meant to do as a physician, as part of a health care team, which is to provide comprehensive patient care.