

Quality Improvement Storyboard: Redwoods Rural Health Center - HPV Self-Collect Pilot

Background

Redwoods Rural Health Center attended a Partnership HealthPlan of California's webinar regarding HPV self-swabs and then relayed the key information to stakeholders at the clinic. Based on their previous Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle, offering self-swabs to eligible patients during visits had strong potential to improve their quality measure.

Implementation

The first step was staff education and support. Staff began learning about the self-swab test, including eligibility criteria and clinical considerations. The lab manager provided a hands-on demonstration during a morning huddle. This helped build confidence and ensured staff felt prepared to support patients. Staff also revisited their previously successful PDSA cycle. Communication between staff and patients emphasized the patient-centered benefits of self-collection and kept self-swab messaging visible and consistent through multiple channels. The consistent communication allowed Partnership to maintain current information like key facts, instructions, and care-gap opportunities, ensuring the self-swabs remained active and front-of-mind for staff, especially at a 2025 cervical cancer screening event. Additional information about the event can be found [here](#).

Addressing Barriers

Initially, Quest Lab only provided five HPV self-swab test kits. Partnership connected with Quest to allow a larger one-time order for Redwoods Rural, which helped get the "Pap-A-Palooza" event scheduled. Because of the connection with Quest, there is no longer a limit to ordering HPV self-swab test kits. Early in the pilot, it was discovered that the electronic health record software (Epic) was automatically assigning a five-year re-testing window to all completed self-swabs, regardless of clinical findings. Redwoods Rural worked to modify the back-end logic so appropriate re-testing intervals populated for most result types. One-year re-tests still require manual adjustment by medical assistants or providers, but the bulk of the issue has been resolved.

Training and Support for Clinical Staff

Medical assistants received hands-on training for the HPV self-swab test and providers received email training and communication. Instructions and education provided by Partnership were utilized and posted in clinic restrooms.



Pictured above: Board post example.

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Patient Selection

Eligibility criteria were reviewed with all clinical staff and were based on the patient's prior screening history. During rooming, medical assistants checked the electronic medical records for previous Pap or HPV results. To ensure clinical accuracy, medical assistants confirmed eligibility with the provider during the patient hand-off. Medical assistants then introduced the HPV self-swab option, explained the purpose of the test, and provided step-by-step instructions for the self-collection process. The workflow allowed them to incorporate the HPV self-swab test option seamlessly into existing visits while maintaining provider oversight and prioritizing patient comfort.

Education Materials

Redwoods Rural shared Partnership education materials, created flyers, talking points, and shared a HPV self-collection guide handout.

Engaging with Patients

Medical assistants would review the chart and screen patient history to gauge if patients were eligible for the HPV self-swab test. They would then offer the HPV self-swab test as a way to complete the cervical cancer screening before patients leave the appointment.

Results and Follow-up Care

All HPV self-swab test results are automatically routed to each patient's primary care provider where next steps are determined based on the patient's results. To date, they have had a small number of positive self-swab results, with nine positive tests. The overall cervical cancer screening abnormal result rate is small, at 13% for 2025.

In addition to the provider workflow, there is an internal risk-management review process. All positive cervical cancer screening results, including those from self-collection, are reviewed to ensure timely follow-up, correct documentation, and follow-up of care. This additional layer of oversight helps ensure that no abnormal result is missed and that patients receive appropriate and timely follow-up care.

Pictures from Redwoods Rural Health Center

