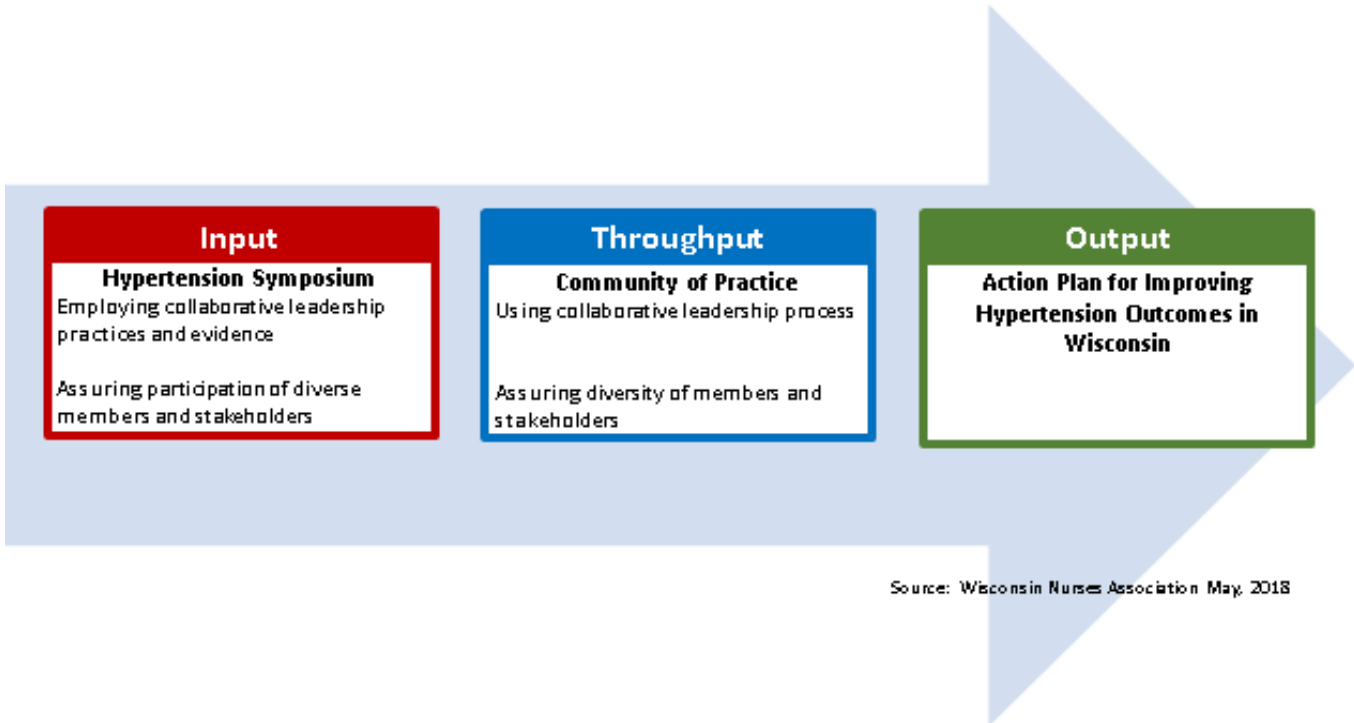


Communities of Practice and Collaborative Leadership The Pathway to a Wisconsin Hypertension Action Plan

Wisconsin Hypertension Action Plan Conceptualization (Proposed)



What is a Community of Practice?

The term may be new to some but the concept is age-old. Communities of practice focus on improvement. It is certainly about “doing” but at its core it is about knowing and learning as a group through inquiry and dialogue leading to new learning and practice. It is often abbreviated as CoP.

How are Communities of Practice Defined?

They are best defined through these two complementary definitions:

- Groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it as they interact regularly (Wenger-Trayner).
- Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise (practice) by interacting on an ongoing basis (CDC).

Why Use the concepts of Community of Practice and Collaborative Leadership? Aren't Meetings Enough?

Developing a community of practice to drive improvements in hypertension provides a framework (refer to proposed conceptualization above) for shared thinking and shared action.

- It brings together people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives together to identify and leverage best practices and standards - the foundation to improving systems of care.

- It aligns thinking and action. It fosters cross-system connectivity to prevent, detect, and control hypertension. These attributes are essential to decreasing silos of thinking and action, resource conservation, and the unnecessary duplication of care and services.
- Communities of Practice are intentional and consist of three characteristics: (1) domain, (2) community, and (3) practice.
- The community of practice framework, when combined with collaborative leadership strategies, creates an atmosphere of shared learning and practice by using inquiry and dialogue among groups who may not naturally come together.
 - In the case for hypertension improvement in Wisconsin it brings together: (1) health plans and payers, (2) health systems and providers, (3) health departments and community organizations, and (4) community advocates and other stakeholders.

The Who, How, and What - Characteristics of a Community of Practice

According to Wenger-Trayner, three characteristics must be in play to meet the definition of a community of practice. These domains include: domain, community, and practice. These domains address what, who, and how of current and future work.

Domain: identify and agree upon a shared domain of practice - improving outcomes for prevention, management, and control of hypertension throughout Wisconsin. In this domain, the members develop knowledge, expertise, and practice their growing expertise collectively.

Community: members engage in joint activities and discussions. It is highly collaborative. Members share information and knowledge. They help one another by coming together regularly and learning together. Collaborative leadership processes and methods enhance the success of the community of practice.

A goal of this learning can yield durable and trusting relationships that transcend organizational, consumer, and professional boundaries. The level of involvement on the community of practice can vary: serving as a core member, leader, or occasional member. Using open-systems approaches to membership adds richness and diversity of perspective and broadens buy-in.

Practice: members demonstrably practice what they are learning. They develop shared practice through an evolving set of experiences, stories, data, and tools. There is fidelity to the process when meeting with the community of practice and when members are back at their home organization.

What is Collaborative Leadership?

The Kansas Health Foundation, in its Community Tool Box, provides a tremendous set of tools to assure collaborative leadership. Collaborative leadership enhances the work of communities of practice. Collaborative leadership is defined as:

- Collaborative problem-solving and decision-making. It's not the leader's job to decide what to do and then tell the group. Rather, the group considers the problem, decides what to do, and counts on the leader to help them focus their effort.
- It is an open process. Collaborative leadership means that the process of decision-making is truly collaborative. The end result is worked out among all the participants: that's collaboration.

- It is about leadership of the process. The purpose of collaborative leadership is to help the collaborative process work, rather than to lead the people involved toward something - to a particular decision, for instance, or in a particular direction.”

Consider: “. . . None of us can expect to act on more than a tiny corner of the great complexity. But in our interrelated society, itself part of an uncompromising interdependent world, we have to think about the whole complexity in order to act relevantly on any part of it.” Source: Harlan Cleveland, The Knowledge Executive

References:

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