Improving the Quality Measures of Depression Screening for Adult Patients in a Family Practice Clinic

PURPOSE
The goal of the quality improvement (QI) project was to increase depression screenings at a primary care clinic to 90%. The QI project was initiated on March 2, 2020 and was tracked for six months.

BACKGROUND
Depression is a serious mental health issue that affects many Americans and accounts for more than $210 billion in health care costs annually (Maurer et al., 2018). The proper identification of depression symptoms is key to successfully initiate treatment options and reduce the risk of complications associated with depression.

METHODOLOGY
A literature review was conducted to examine various depression screening tools. After the literature review was completed it was concluded the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) was a reliable tool for depression screening.

RESULTS
After the implementation of the QI project, approximately 49% of clinic patients completed the PHQ-9, compared to 52% before the intervention. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic during this timeframe, the PHQ-2 survey was substituted for the PHQ-9 for all virtual visits. If the PHQ-2 was found to be positive, then the PHQ-9 was administered. The PHQ-2 was not tracked due to the information technologist’s increased workload from switching from face-to-face visits to all online virtual patient visits.

IMPLICATIONS
Screening for depression in the adult population is key for the proper management of symptoms. Although the QI results did not demonstrate a favorable increase, they did provide a sustainable workflow for depression screening in a primary care clinic suited for both face to face and virtual patient visits.