

RIQI/RI-PTN TCPI Exemplary Practice Story: University Orthopedics, Inc.



At University Orthopedics, our team works to advance the goal of our Mission: Provide the Highest Quality Orthopedic Care Integrated with World Class Education and Research

At University Orthopedics, Inc. (UOI), we are teachers, healers, and innovators. At our six locations throughout the state of Rhode Island, our 66 clinicians provide state of the art orthopedic care for approximately 54,000 patients each year. As we describe on our website, <https://universityorthopedics.com/>, the goal of our independently owned organization is to provide “the highest quality orthopedic care integrated with world class education and research.” With this aim as our focus, we effectively address the needs of patients with an expansive variety of orthopedic health issues, including back and neck pain, joint pain, sports medicine problems, shoulder pain, hand problems, hip and knee pain and foot and ankle injuries. We do this with a high caliber of success due to our engagement with intensive training and sub-specialization. Given our physicians’ super specialization in very specific niches in our field, we have advanced expertise that effects enhanced clinical outcomes for our patients. This endeavor is enriched by our strong affiliation with the Brown Alpert Medical School. Our organization serves as the acting head of the Department of Orthopedics at Brown and we work hand in hand with orthopedic surgical fellows to support the advancement of their learning. Through this relationship, we help augment our field of practice and better serve our community. We also direct many clinical research efforts to develop innovation in surgical techniques.

Along with expertly treating an extensive range of orthopedic issues, we are positioned to provide service for a wide ranging population of patients. Given that our locations span across our state, our facilities are accessible for individuals in urban settings along with more remote regions. We have specialists that provide care for pediatric patients, athletes, and those experiencing issues due to aging or trauma. To address the wide ranging needs of our patients, we have centers that focus on the following specialties: the Center for Spine Health, the Hand & Wrist Center, the Shoulder & Elbow Center, the Foot & Ankle Center, the Joint Replacement Center, the Sports Medicine Center, the Pediatric Orthopedic Center, the Trauma & Fracture Center, the Oncology Center, the Cartilage Repair Center, the Surgical Center and our Urgent Care centers known as OthoDirect.

With these attributes combined, we continuously strive to achieve the goal of our Mission: *Provide the Highest Quality Orthopedic Care Integrated with World Class Education and Research*. Given our deeply innovative mindset, we have embraced advancements in healthcare to focus our approach of continuous quality improvement. In this work, we have benefitted from the leadership of our Champion Provider, Dr. Matthew Smith and our Chief Operating Officer (and Athena super-user), Michelle DeRoche. Our deep engagement in quality improvement and innovation has led us to ongoing growth and achievement in a number of areas. In particular, we continuously work to advance our clinical quality through a variety of efforts, we leverage technology to advance our care and, most importantly, we prioritize empowering our patients to ensure they are at the center of every service we provide.

Strides in Advancing Clinical Quality Improvement and Optimizing Care

UOI regularly embraces change across our organization. For example, in May of 2017, UOI transitioned from paper charts to using Athena, a robust Electronic Health Record (EHR) system. Across our sites, we worked to ensure this implementation was effective through consciously defining and training efficient

workflows for the range of staff involved. With this tool in place, we successfully submitted Meaningful Use for the first time in October of 2017 (due to an extension from CMS). That year, we also successfully submitted MIPS 2017 via Athena. As part of our participation in TCPI, we tracked the Clinical Quality Measure, *Tobacco Use: Screening and Cessation Intervention*. As seen in the adjacent table, our current performance was above the National MIPS Benchmark for this measure.

University Orthopedics Performance Chart			
Quality Measure	Performance Target	Current Performance	National MIPS Benchmark
Prevention			
Tobacco Use: Screening and Cessation Intervention	97%	84%	83%

Through our involvement in TCPI, we tracked the Clinical Quality Measure, Tobacco Use: Screening and Cessation Intervention. As seen in the table above, our performance was above the National MIPS Benchmark for this measure.

There are many examples of how we engage in quality improvement initiatives that have led to improved patient care. One such instance is Dr. Smith’s engagement with the Rhode Island Quality Institute (RIQI) Practice Transformation Network (PTN) and RI Department of Health to provide patients with a Chronic Pain Self-Management Program. This program runs for 6 weeks (once per week) at University Orthopedics locations. All books and other materials are supplied and free to the patient involved. The program is designed to help patients managing pain, improve sleep, manage medications, eat healthier, improve communication with family and doctors, be more active, and use action plans and problem-solving for better decision-making. Given the current Opioid Crisis and challenges with addiction that can occur when patients are prescribed opioids for pain, we are happy to provide this program and support our community in this endeavor.

We were also pleased to partner with the RIQI PTN and ProChange in the *HealthCoach for Me* pilot that was offered as part of TCPI. For this pilot, we enrolled 22 patients at our East Greenwich and Kettle Point locations to participate in this unique, online program that applies a behavior change model based on the Transtheoretical Model of Change. The particular modules involved were designed to assist patients with Smoking Cessation, Healthy Eating and Exercise. 14 of our patients opted to receive text messages, which provided them with stage based texts to support them in reaching goals.

It is important to note that success in improvement and change ultimately stems from having a deeply engaged staff. We believe that, for excellence in quality, we need to have an exceptional team and support for staff so they can grow and advance in their roles. We work to provide an outstanding benefit package to all employees. UOI recently completed a staff satisfaction survey of which over 100 employees participated. The results from this survey were excellent. We are very proud of the “Joy in Work” we foster in our culture.

Engaging with Technology to Enhance Practice and Care Continuity and Coordination

As part of being at the forefront of innovations in our areas of specialty and expertise, UOI regularly embraces opportunities to leverage new technologies that advance care and improve the patient experience. This can be observed through our involvement in numerous clinical research efforts to develop new orthopedic surgery techniques, new surgical implant devices, and new ways to prevent orthopedic injury. We also invest in advanced equipment that support the exceptional outcomes we attain. For example, we use an EOS, low dose 2D/3D imaging system for adults and pediatric patients with musculoskeletal pathologies. In seconds, this equipment produces full body images in a weight-bearing, functional position. By using EOS, patient exposure to radiation is reduced while better images are provided for evaluation (given the upright weight bearing posture).



At UOI, our patients benefit from our expertise as well as our investment in key equipment needed for evaluation. For example, our EOS imaging system reduces patient exposure to radiation and provides better images for clinician review.

We have also worked to use our EHR to its fullest potential. For instance, we have set-up a bi-directional interface between our instance of Athena with CurrentCare (the Rhode Island Health Information Exchange – HIE). Through this interface, we send data to CurrentCare, so our patients health information is available in the CurrentCare Viewer (HIE Repository) if they are enrolled (RI is an opt-in state). We are also able to receive a CurrentCare Continuity of Care (CCD) document directly into our patient record. As Athena is an advanced EHR, we can reconcile key elements of this data (such as medications, problem list entries, and allergies) into our system, which is particularly helpful for new patients or for treating individuals who have gone to multiple hospital systems for care. As part of our planning and implementation process, we carefully developed workflows to integrate the use of CurrentCare information. By working with our teams to help them understand how to use our EHR, we are able to improve our transitions of care and avoid duplicate testing.

We also worked with our partners at RIQI to implement a RIQI Care Management Dashboard. Having the near real time data about our patients’ Emergency Department (ED) and inpatient admissions and discharges is beneficial for tracking our surgical populations. If one of our post-surgical patients goes to an ED, we can be immediately alerted so we are able to provide coordination and follow-up for this individual.

A Patient Centered, Quality Mindset Serving the Rhode Island Community and Reducing Costs

As described on our website, “we believe that the best quality healthcare comes from a well-informed patient.” We care about our patients and work hard to identify areas for improvement that directly impact their experience. To gain a better understanding of their needs and opinions, we survey patients (via our portal) on an annual basis and utilize our patients’ feedback for continuous patient centered improvements.

Our online patient Portal also serves to improve our patients’ experience as, through our portal, they are able to access their personal health information, make online payments, and message the practice with questions they may have. Also, on our website, we have developed a comprehensive online encyclopedia of orthopedic problems and treatments that includes symptom charts, videos and information about symptomology. Individuals accessing our site can find information to identify what provider may be the best match for their health concern and, if they prefer, electronically request to schedule an appointment. Through our in-person care in conjunction with our online resources, patients can be empowered and gain in their understanding of their orthopedic health. Finally, UOI uses social media to help share information with the community about our

practice, including posts on Twitter and LinkedIn, as seen in the adjacent picture. Having a social media presence helps us to further spread information about orthopedic topics along with some of the unique activities going on at UOI.

Another endeavor that epitomizes our patient centered approach is the creation of our walk-in clinics, called OrthoDirect. We identified that many patients were unnecessarily going to EDs for orthopedic issues. By creating OrthoDirect facilities, we are able to better serve these patients by providing an opportunity for them to come directly to us for this care. By coming to OrthoDirect, patients save time and receive better care, as our providers are all specialized in orthopedics and have access to the specific tools and equipment needed to provide the highest level of care in our field. Providing this alternate setting also reduces cost, as patients are avoiding unnecessarily utilizing EDs. During our participation in TCPi, we tracked a total of 1,387 avoided ED visits with a cost savings of \$2,219,200.

Similarly, we are proud of our recently opened Kettle Point facility, which boasts state-of-the-art medical offices and an ambulatory surgery center. By performing surgical procedures at this facility we promote additional savings in healthcare as our in-house surgical costs are significantly lower than hospitals. This



The visual above is an example of a recent post on LinkedIn. UOI is active on social media: we share information about our practice and help spread information about orthopedics related topics

facility is focused entirely on the patient experience and offers patients access to physicians across all sub specialties of orthopedic care.

Conclusion

At UOI, our exemplary status stems from our organization's drive to continuously improve our quality. We embrace innovation and are leaders in research and education with the aim of bettering our current practice and the future of orthopedic care in our communities. To succeed in our aims, we have proven to be leaders in using technology to advance our care while continuously centering our focus on our patients. We gained from our engagement with TCPI and the team at the Rhode Island Quality Institute. While University Orthopedics has graduated from the TCPI program, as we are participating in the use of bundled payments for care for improvement of hip and joint replacement, we continue to use the concepts of the TCPI change package to advance our work. As Dr. Smith was recently chosen by CMS as a QPP Champion for the next 3 years, we look forward to continuing to lead and use our strengths and expertise as catalysts for positive change in the field of orthopedics.