



Virginia Mason Kirkland Medical Center Kirkland, WA

Case Study Summary

The National Academy of Medicine's (NAM) clinician well-being case studies provide readers with tangible information to understand organizational initiatives across the country that address systemic factors contributing to clinician burnout. This case study is not a prescriptive roadmap. Rather, the NAM hopes that the case studies will serve as an idea-generating resource for leaders to take action to improve the well-being of clinicians, trainees, and students. Find additional case studies at nam.edu/clinicianwellbeing/case-studies.

Overview

Kirkland Medical Center is an outpatient clinic in the Virginia Mason Health System. Kirkland uses an innovative, system-wide management method to improve patient care and safety by

“It is empowering to work in a system that values collaboration and collegiality. It can be overwhelming and lonely to be burdened with some of the responsibility we have to shoulder as clinicians. Here, the emotional work is dispersed among the team to minimize burnout.”

(Pharmacist perspective)

eliminating waste and inefficiencies. This management method is used to streamline repetitive aspects of care delivery, standardize clinical roles, and engage in continuous learning activities.

This case study highlights key features of Kirkland Medical Center's management approach that have led to improved rates of employee satisfaction, engagement, and overall well-being. Two pillars play a central role in improving well-being: (1) workflow optimization and (2) a culture of collegiality, respect, and innovation. To read the full case study, please visit nam.edu/clinicianwellbeing/case-studies.



Workflow Optimization and Workload

The physical design and visual cues of Kirkland Medical Center's clinic reduce clinician burnout and improve their well-being by facilitating patient transitions and improving collaboration and communication among colleagues.

All clinicians at Kirkland Medical Center practice to the full extent of their education and training. This provides better reimbursement, improves patient care, and enhances clinician joy.

Clinical pharmacists collaborate with primary care providers to deliver patient care. They consult patients independently, addressing medication questions and providing recommendations for

altering them. Executive leadership at the Medical Center notes that the return-on-investment typically outweighs the salaried costs of their pharmacists because physicians and other advanced practitioners have additional time to consult more complex patients, who are typically reimbursed at a higher rate.

Medical assistants (MAs) help reduce clinician workload and increase clinician productivity by managing administrative tasks, thereby freeing up time for physicians and other advanced practitioners to spend with patients. Clinicians noted a high level of trust for the MAs with whom they work, and Kirkland Medical Center boasts a high MA retention rate.

Clinicians have mandatory 20-minute “pauses” throughout the day to perform indirect care tasks, partake in professional development activities, and participate in organizational improvement processes. Clinicians note that having protected time contributes to work-life integration and overall joy.

Culture of Collegiality, Respect, and Innovation

Executive leadership and human resources introduces a culture of collegiality and respect during the hiring process and maintains it through

At a Glance

Workflow Optimization

- Practicing to full extent of education and training
- Standardized clinical roles
- Multidisciplinary team care
- Protected time

Culture of Collegiality, Respect, and Innovation

- Expectation setting during hiring and onboarding
- Team discussions
- Valued employee feedback

transparent leadership and an enforced code of conduct.

Executive leadership engenders a culture of innovation by supporting quality improvement activities at all levels, breaking down hierarchical structures, and leveling power differentials. Kirkland Medical Center grounds their culture of innovation by respecting individual ideas and voices and understanding that the people who know the system best are those who work within it. Leadership encourages all clinicians and staff members to speak up when they encounter administrative or direct care inefficiencies by mobilizing a standardized process that addresses these problems using a team-based approach.

“The most important thing is the culture of the place, not tolerating what we don’t condone, and having a critical mass of positive role models and mentors so that disrespect doesn’t have any sanctuary.”

(Leadership perspective)

Impact

- 90% of non-clinician staff is “content” or “engaged” (internal survey data, September 2018).
- 93% of clinicians report being “content” or “engaged” (internal survey data, September 2018).
- Leadership annually surveys staff and clinicians to measure their well-being, engagement, satisfaction, turnover, communication, and teamwork.
- Employees believe that Kirkland Medical Center’s workflow optimization strategy and culture of collegiality, respect, and innovation directly improved their well-being and reduced certain drivers of burnout.

Read the full case study at
nam.edu/clinicianwellbeing/case-studies