



Dr. Angela How, Rheumatologist, PQI Alumni

## Dramatic rise seen in patient attendance at Hazelton specialist clinic after Quality Improvement project

Using Quality Improvement science, rheumatologist Dr. Angela How has cut patient no-shows at her rural visiting specialist clinic in the community of Hazelton in Northwest BC, by 70%.

### Why it matters

Patients with inflammatory rheumatological conditions require regular follow up to titrate their medications and control their symptoms. In small rural communities, such patients rely on intermittent visiting specialist clinics. If a patient is unable to attend their visiting clinic appointment, they wait longer for the next. This makes their clinical management more challenging. Clinic non-attendance is a multifactorial and complex problem. Understanding and addressing the reasons behind non-attendance improves patient outcomes, reduces patient wait times and optimizes the visiting specialist's time.

### The details

Visiting specialist rheumatologist Dr. Angela How was frustrated by how often patients were not attending clinic appointments during her visits to Hazelton. Frequent clinic non-attendance of these patients with chronic inflammatory conditions made continuing care extremely challenging. After enrolling in Northern Health's Advanced Physician Quality Improvement (PQI) Level III Virtual Action Learning Series (VALS) training, she applied her new knowledge of QI science and methodology to this problem aiming to increase baseline clinic attendance from 76% to 90% in 6 months. Her change ideas included improving the appointment reminder call process, motivational interviewing to support patient self-management, improved orientation for new patients and performing follow up calls to patients who had missed appointments. In 12 months, Dr. How reduced clinic no-shows from 24% to just 7% improving clinic attendance to 93% and surpassing her goal. Another success for Quality Improvement science and another happy Northern PQI Alumni!