



IMPROVING PARTICIPATION IN MEDICARE ANNUAL WELLNESS VISITS

J Wilkes, J Sanchez, A Taylor, A Yancey, N Ali, MC Turner

Jeremy Wilkes, M.D.
Internal Medicine – Pediatrics
East Carolina University
Greenville, North Carolina 27858
wilkesj18@ecu.edu

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

- Medicare is the federal health insurance program for adults older than 65 years, patients with end stage renal disease, and adults younger than 65 years who are disabled.
- Patients enrolled in Medicare Part B insurance plans for >12 months qualify for a free annual wellness visit which offers a personalized comprehensive review of health risk factors and preventive health planning - services include cancer screenings, advanced care planning, fall risk assessments, immunizations, bone density evaluation, and mental/cognitive health evaluations.
- Medicare Annual Wellness visits can help Accountable Care Organizations address care gaps, improve quality measures in the evolving American pay-for-performance system and increase practice revenue (1).
- Most importantly, Medicare Annual Wellness visits are associated with improved screening rates, reduced cancer burden, and greater immunization rates (2,3).

AIM STATEMENT: By May 1, 2021, we aim to have 50% of Accountable Care Organization (ACO) Medicare patients with completed Medicare Wellness exams in the ECU Adult and Pediatric Health Care clinic.

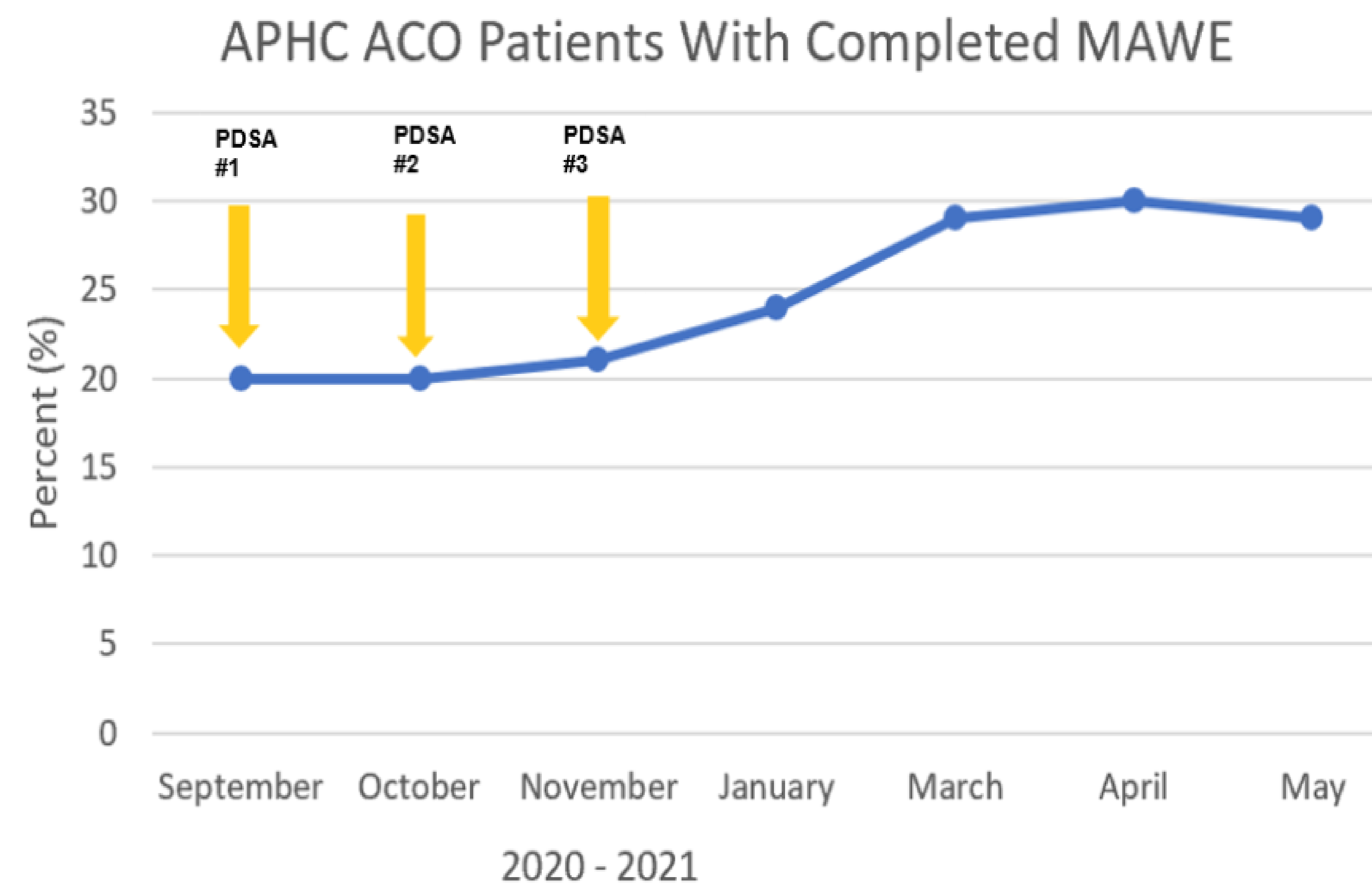
METHODS

PDSA #1: Identified 220 patients belonging to our Medicare ACO who had not had a wellness visit within the last year. Created a dot phrase **.medicarewellness** that explains the importance of the Medicare Annual Wellness Visit and sent patients a modified MyChart message encouraging them to schedule an appointment.

PDSA #2: Education was provided to clinical staff via email and residents during afternoon conference. Nurses to pre-chart and flag patients due for MAWE during pre-clinic huddle. Physicians were instructed to discuss the importance of Medicare Wellness Visit during clinical encounter with patient. Physicians used the same dot phrase **.medicarewellness** in patients' after-visit summary and encouraged the patient to schedule this appointment at checkout.

PDSA #3: Worked with information technology to add Medicare Annual Wellness Visit in the health maintenance tab in the electronic health record to help identify eligible patients with upcoming clinic appointments.

RESULTS



In September 2020, only 20% of 220 ACO patients in our practice had completed their annual visit. By November 2020, that percentage increased to 21%. The percentage increased to 24% in January 2021, 29% in March, and peaked at 30% in April. Our MAWE appointments are currently booked through the end of July.

DISCUSSION

Despite a significant reduction in clinic visits during the COVID-19 pandemic, our interventions have shown a relative 50% increase in Medicare Annual Wellness visit participation. Sustaining and building upon these gains could significantly increase utilization of preventive services and improve the overall quality of healthcare delivered to a highly vulnerable population in our ACO. We are also hopeful that larger institutional changes implemented by our project will create a ripple effect for other Medicare recipients throughout the region of Eastern North Carolina.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- I would like to thank:
- Rebecca Suggs RN for conducting all of the MAWE visits in our clinic this year
 - Dr Tumin for input throughout and assistance with the translation of this project to paper
 - Our entire APHC clinic staff for their hard work implementing change for our patients

REFERENCES

1. Cuenca AE, Kapsner S. Medicare Wellness Visits: Reassessing Their Value to Your Patients and Your Practice. *Fam Pract Manag.* 2019 Mar/Apr;26(2):25-30. PMID: 30855118.
2. Camacho F, Yao NA, Anderson R. The Effectiveness of Medicare Wellness Visits in Accessing Preventive Screening. *J Prim Care Community Health.* 2017 Oct;8(4):247-255. doi: 10.1177/2150131917736613. Epub 2017 Oct 28. PMID: 29082793; PMCID: PMC5932741.
3. Shen AK, Warnock R, Kelman JA. Driving immunization through the Medicare Annual Wellness Visit: A growing opportunity. *Vaccine.* 2017 Dec 15;35(50):6938-6940. doi: 10.1016/j.vaccine.2017.10.055. Epub 2017 Oct 28. PMID: 29089193.