

Background

MinuteClinic, the retail medical clinic of CVS Health, has 1,100 locations inside CVS Pharmacy stores, select Target stores, and the new CVS HealthHUBs. These clinics offer a safe and convenient setting for non-emergency treatment and provide complementary care between primary care visits. After starting in 1999 with eight services, MinuteClinic now offers care for everything from minor illness and injury to chronic medical issues.

In 2018, MinuteClinic partnered with the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) Institute at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing to work on quality and safety. They soon learned about Age-Friendly Health Systems, an initiative of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and The John A. Hartford Foundation, in partnership with the American Hospital Association and the Catholic Health Association of the United States.

MinuteClinic leaders saw that an increasing number of their patients were 65 years and older – more than three-quarters of a million in 2018. As a result, MinuteClinic joined the Age-Friendly Health Systems initiative to introduce age-friendly care across their 1,100 locations.

Age-friendly care entails providing evidence-based care to older adults that reliably implements the “4Ms”: What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility (see Figure 1).

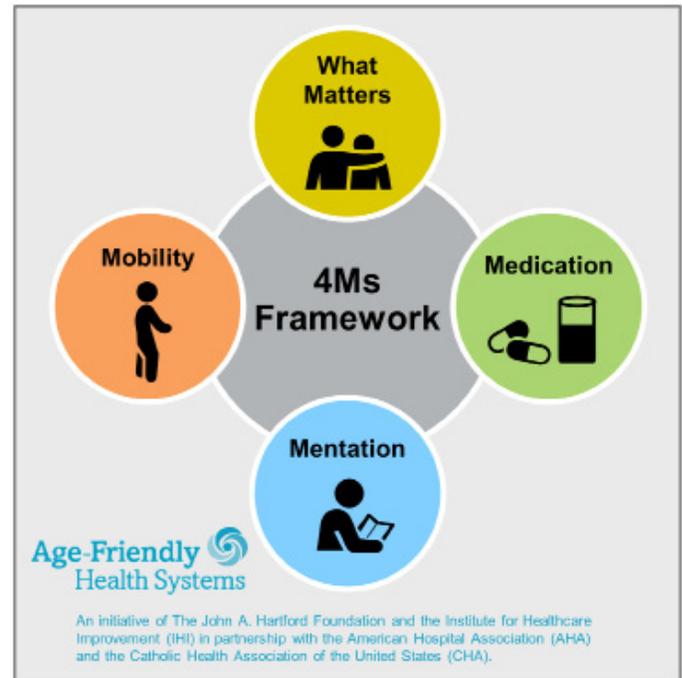


Figure 1. 4Ms Framework of an Age-Friendly Health System

Approach

In September 2018, MinuteClinic received a planning grant from The John A. Hartford Foundation, which enabled their participation in an IHI Age-Friendly Health Systems Action Community to learn what it would take to implement the 4Ms in all 1,100 MinuteClinic locations. MinuteClinic leaders conducted a number of focus groups and pilot projects to incorporate the 4Ms into the workflow. They met with patients and developed a set of practice-based tools, professional development and orientation programs, and an implementation plan.

The intention was to launch the new approach in April 2020. Then, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic struck. They asked themselves, according to Anne Pohnert, MSN, FNP-BC, Director of Clinical Quality at MinuteClinic, “Do we go forward, do we not? We ultimately decided to roll it out nationally, as an evidence-based approach to care for older adults is needed now more than ever.”

MinuteClinic’s approach to becoming an Age-Friendly Health System focuses deeply on the training and education of their workforce, which includes nurse practitioners (NPs) and physicians’ assistants (PAs). That is where the partnership with CWRU has had such an impact. More than 3,000 MinuteClinic providers are currently being trained on the 4Ms of age-friendly care.

An orientation program for providers explains what the 4Ms are, how to assess them, how to act on them, and how to integrate them into the MinuteClinic workflow. In monthly webinars, providers see case scenarios illustrating how to incorporate the 4Ms into various types of visits.

The team has compiled short video vignettes to help MinuteClinic providers understand the 4Ms in more depth. (The providers receive continuing education credits for participating.) There is a virtual training clinic through which providers can practice the 4Ms and learn what it means to shift from a regular visit to an age-friendly visit. So far, hundreds of MinuteClinic providers have demonstrated competence that includes assessing and acting on the 4Ms in the virtual training clinic. “The experience of virtual simulation is very valuable for understanding the flow,” said Mary Dolansky, PhD, RN, Director of the QSEN Institute at CWRU.

In MinuteClinic’s electronic health record (EHR), there is a new tab for any patient age 65 and older. When the provider pulls up the record, a template appears in which they document the patient’s answers for What Matters, as well as the screenings conducted on Medication, Mentation, and Mobility. The template also captures actions taken to address the 4Ms.

“When we were first thinking about this, we created a process map,” said Pohnert. Leaders conducted focus groups and talked with providers, asking, “How best would the 4Ms fit into the flow?” Pohnert notes, “You always have to think about how new workflows will improve the patient experience.”



Another key part of this work is educating patients about the 4Ms. The team produced a brochure to share with patients, which outlines the 4Ms, and where providers can write detailed, personalized information and instructions pertaining to each of the 4Ms. This brochure facilitates communication between the MinuteClinic providers and patients, as well as patients’ families and primary care providers.

The following overview provides more detail on how MinuteClinic is implementing each of the 4Ms.

What Matters

Providers integrate a discussion of What Matters either into the beginning or conclusion of the visit. The team has developed techniques for how to message to patients. Ultimately, the messaging is, “Share with me what matters most to you about your health,” said Pohnert, “so we can align your treatment plan with what’s most important for you.”

The team asked patients in focus groups, “How would it be if we started asking these questions?” Patients responded, “Well, that’s good, but just tell us why you’re doing it. It is a little bit of a shift,” said Pohnert. That’s why they make patient education an explicit part of the 4Ms implementation – including a patient cue card that explains what the 4Ms are and why they are integrated into the visit. “That really sets the tone for the visit,” said Pohnert.

Medication

MinuteClinic enhanced electronic medication reconciliation and identified high-risk medications. Although they were already doing this, the 4Ms raised their awareness.

MinuteClinic providers do medication reconciliation at every visit for every patient. In the EHR, the Synopsis tab allows providers to list all the patient medications and divide them into categories. This enables providers to see the high-risk medications and how they interact with others.

Mobility

Whenever possible, MinuteClinic integrates the 4Ms into the existing workflow without adding extra steps. A great example is Mobility. Providers simply observe their patients as they get up from the waiting area to enter the clinic, how they stand up and sit down, and how they get up on the exam table. It's a simplified, modified version of "Get Up and Go," a popular mobility assessment.

Mentation

Mentation has been incorporated most recently. During the case history, before the physical assessment, MinuteClinic providers conduct a quick assessment of memory and mood. They had been using the PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire-9), a common depression screening, for a number of years, but now they have also added the Mini-Cog, a screening for cognitive impairment in older adults.



Outcomes

MinuteClinic has developed an extensive EHR dashboard for their age-friendly care work and the team is monitoring the 4Ms uptake by each provider. In addition, new questions have been added to the patient satisfaction survey to understand patients' perspectives on receiving 4Ms care.

In early 2021, MinuteClinic will be recognized as the largest retail clinic network in the US to adopt age-friendly care system-wide. The team is continuing to track the outcomes of age-friendly care and incorporating the learnings into its practice moving forward.

Lessons Learned

To date, MinuteClinic leaders have learned the value of making 4Ms care documentation easy through adaptations in the EHR. "That's a very important aspect of capturing what's done in the visit and making sure it's documented," said Pohnert.

MinuteClinic has also seen the value of concrete interventions such as the patient brochure. The brochure serves as a communication vehicle for informing and instructing older adult patients, and also as a mechanism for MinuteClinic providers to include recommendations that patients can share with their primary care providers.

This work has been led and driven by MinuteClinic NPs and PAs, who have quickly adapted to the 4M process. "They really have a way of empathizing with the patient and really understanding their experience with their condition," said Pohnert. According to Dolansky, the providers "have a skill set that really leads to success. They're inherent leaders. They know how to speak up and influence others. They're very committed to care delivery... They not only have the technical skill set but also the humanistic, emotional component."

Finally, MinuteClinic leaders have learned that the 4Ms offer an ideal framework for delivering care to older adults. "At CVS Health, our purpose is helping people on the path to better health. Our strategy is to create unmatched human connection," said Pohnert. "That, to me, is exactly what the 4Ms do."

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement is grateful to MinuteClinic and the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses Institute at Case Western Reserve University Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing who devoted their time and passion to this work. Specifically, we would like to thank Angela Patterson, DNP, FNP-BC, NEA-BC, FAANP, and Anne Pohnert, MSN, FNP-BC, of MinuteClinic and Mary Dolansky, PhD, RN, FAAN, of the QSEN Institute for their leadership in the adoption of the 4Ms at MinuteClinic and in the Age-Friendly Health Systems movement.

What Is an Age-Friendly Health System?

Becoming an Age-Friendly Health System entails reliably providing a set of four evidence-based elements of high-quality care, known as the “4Ms,” to all older adults: What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility.

Visit: ihi.org/AgeFriendly