

Using Research to Improve Treatment

THE MAYO CLINIC CARE NETWORK IS WORKING TO IMPROVE COLLABORATION

By Andrea Nagel

Kootenai Health is participating in a research study by the Mayo Clinic Care Network. The study, called the Statin Choice Implementation Project, is designed to study the effects of physicians and patients working together to make medical decisions. This particular project focuses on the decision to start taking statin (cholesterol-lowering) medication to prevent cardiovascular events like heart attacks.

The study was prompted by changes in clinical guidelines that recommend when cholesterol medication should be used to reduce the risk of heart attack in patients with certain risk levels. The new guidelines are controversial because they suggest a risk cutoff level that patients and physicians (including leading experts) may not agree with. Under the study, physicians involve patients in the decision-making process by informing them about their heart attack risk level without a medication and how that risk might change if they choose to start taking one.

The medical community is calling this approach to making decisions together “shared decision making.”

“The study is also assessing current attitudes about

shared decision making,” said Ryan Gilles, M.D., Kootenai Clinic Family Medicine Coeur d’Alene Residency and physician leader for the Statin Choice Implementation Project at Kootenai. “As we use and integrate this approach in our care model, we’ll be able to track changes in what our patients and physicians think about collaborating on health care decisions.”

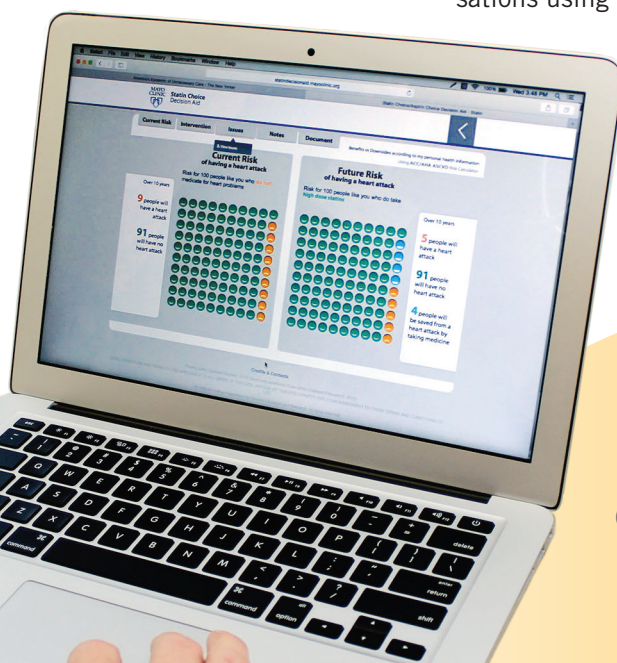
Over the next two years, all of Kootenai’s primary care clinics will implement a new tool, called the Statin Choice Decision Aid, into their routines. The web-based tool displays a patient’s individual risk of having a heart attack both with and without a statin medication. It displays this information visually in a way that patients can easily view and understand. The goal of the tool is to encourage patients and their physician to have meaningful discussions about whether starting a statin is appropriate or not.

“We are really excited to have Kootenai partnering with us in this project,” said Victor Montori, M.D., lead developer of the Statin Choice tool and principal investigator for the study. “Patients and physicians everywhere are struggling with whether to start a statin medication to prevent heart attacks and strokes.

Kootenai is figuring out how to improve these conversations using the Statin Choice tool. This could

help improve the quality of preventive care for a lot of people.”

Ryan Gilles, M.D., demonstrates the Statin Choice Decision Aid at the Kootenai Clinic Family Medicine office in Coeur d’Alene. The tool shows a visual representation of the risks and benefits of taking statin medication to prevent heart attacks.



 **PARTNERS IN CARE** Learn more about Kootenai Health’s involvement with the Mayo Clinic Care Network at KH.org/mayo.