# Innovation Report



Washington Association for Community Health
Community Health Centers Advancing Quality Care for All

## Integrating Care to Improve Outcomes

HealthPoint

## HealthPoint Integrates Medical and Dental Care to Improve Patient Outcomes

# Integrating Medical & Dental Care

Integrating medical and dental care has been a longstanding goal of community health centers and Washington State. As a result, HealthPoint's dental team has been performing blood pressure screenings well before it became a requirement to take a patient's blood pressure before receiving a local anesthetic. The piece that proved to be challenging was communication between the dental and medical teams when a patient's blood pressure was dangerously high. There was significant risk for missing an opportunity to engage a patient with medical intervention.

When HealthPoint began their electronic health record migration from NexGen to Epic they saw an opportunity to build in a new blood pressure screening tool that would enable the timely sharing of medical information, improved communication between the dental and medical teams and improved health outcomes for patients.



**Snapshot of HealthPoint**

- **Has been providing affordable, high-quality healthcare for over 50 years**
- **Provides care for more than 100,000 people at 19 locations throughout King County**
- **195,366 Medical Visits & 73,191 Dental Visits in 2023**
- **70 languages spoken across services**
- **Services include medical, dental, behavioral health, social services, & onsite pharmacies**

# Program Overview

Using Epic, HealthPoint created a new health screening tool for measuring dental patient blood pressure, called Our Practice Advisory Procedure or OPA. The goal of OPA is to institute a standard communication process for alerting medical teams when patients present to dental with elevated blood pressure, which in some cases may impede dental care.

Using a set of guidelines, staff determine what levels of blood pressure are safe to treat and when emergency level care is required. If a patient's blood pressure is above 160/100, the system automatically sends the OPA message to the medical department's Epic in-basket.

The message tells the medical team their mutual patient presented to the dental department with high blood pressure. The medical team then will follow up with the patient for a visit via phone or in person, however the patient may continue their dental care.

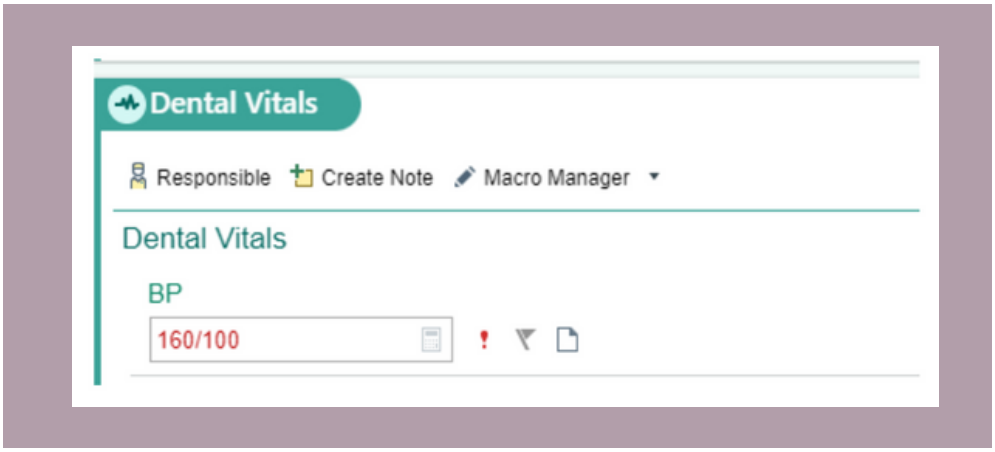


When a patient's blood pressure is extremely elevated (>180/110) the dental provider follows up with a separate in-basket message with an attached patient chart asking for consultation with the patient and letting them know dental care cannot proceed until the patient's blood pressure is reduced to a safe level. Although there is not a custom OPA built for pregnant patients at this time, the teams have guidance to follow with a course of action outlined in the event a pregnant patient presents to dental with elevated blood pressure.

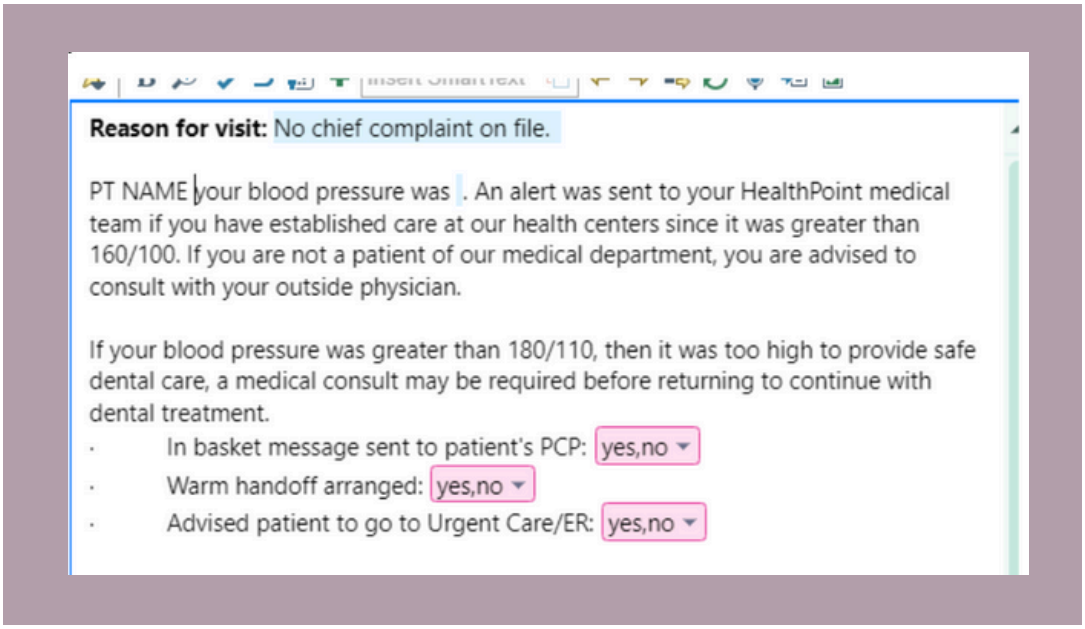
For dental patients that are not health center medical patients, the dental team can search to see if the patient's primary care provider (PCP) is within Epic's network. If their PCP is in Epic's system, they can be messaged directly. If the dental patient's PCP is outside the Epic network, the provider has guidance for connecting with their PCP for evaluation of blood pressure before resuming their dental care.

If a patient's blood pressure is dangerously high but asymptomatic the provider advises the patient to be transported by ambulance to the emergency room for emergent medical care. If the patient declines, staff document the reason for patient refusal and advise the patient to be transported by a friend or family member and to seek care. The provider will also reach out to their PCP updating them on the patient's status. If the patient exhibits symptoms, staff treat the case as a medical emergency and follow the health center's Code Blue Procedure.

Below you can see how the vitals template in Epic looks when an abnormal BP is entered.




Below is the Epic SmartPhrase being used by the health center to document when a patient's blood pressure is above the threshold and the actions taken.




# Staff & Training

The process of transitioning from NexGen to Epic took a year. During this time staff formed work groups focused on building and integrating their system into Epic. The Epic dental workgroup consulted with various other workgroups, the medical director and other medical specialty directors in the planning process to ensure the blood pressure indicators they used were useful and their mode of communication and cross department workflows would be effective.

## Challenges

**The dental team is still refining its warm hand off process at each site and are tackling identified gaps in the system through intensive work sessions they call ‘turbo rooms’.**

# Results to Date

Since the new health screening tool was implemented in October 2024 to July 2025 the dental department recorded BP for 16,772 patients and 808 patients had an OPA message triggered (>/= 160 systolic OR >/= 100 diastolic).



Washington Association for Community Health

**This innovation report was supported by the Arcora Foundation.**

The Association's innovation reports aim to support community health centers in leading innovation by identifying successful promising practices and communicating them to the statewide network.

Does your CHC have an innovation to share? Let us know!