

Vermont Oxford Network is a **nonprofit** voluntary collaboration of health care professionals from more than **1,400 member centers** working together for **more than 30 years** as an **interdisciplinary** community.

Mission: To improve the quality, safety, and value of care for newborn infants and their families through a coordinated program of data-driven quality improvement, education, and research.

Improve Nurse Retention

Nurse retention relies strongly on positive practice environments which are improved by participation in QI projects.

Boudreau et al. West J Nurs Res

Reduce Patient Care Cost

\$262,000

Mean cost per infant < 32 weeks

Phibbs et al. J Pediatr

Example: VON Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome quality improvement collaborative.

Reduced length of stay by 2 days per infant.

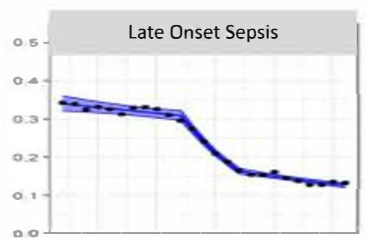
Patrick et al. Pediatrics

Cost Savings Estimate: \$7,000 per infant

Improve Outcomes

Members submit data supporting network-wide benchmarking.

Rates of acquired infection have dropped by 34% for VON members.



Horbar et al. Pediatrics

Increase Value

Increase Patient Engagement

NICU graduate families are full members of the VON multidisciplinary improvement team.

Improve Equity

VON data items can be filtered by race and ethnicity. Health Equity quality improvement toolkit including Never Events to be launched 2025.

Horbar et al. Pediatrics

Supporting documentation for Return on Investment

VON QI creates value for the organization in multiple dimensions: improving outcomes, equity and the patient/family experience, increasing the organization's reputation for high quality care, decreasing patient care costs, and improving nurse retention.

Improve Outcomes

Utilize data to benchmark improvement. VON supports data-driven quality improvement in the NICU and beyond. VON serves as a neutral, independent party in analyzing and providing benchmarking data for individual centers and groups that can be used to identify local opportunities for improvement of neonatal care and to track those improvements.

Supported with data for gap analyses, VON QI teams partner with their local leadership to align their work with organizational goals and then use advanced VON reporting tools to demonstrate improvement and return on investment.

Teams have demonstrated measurable improvement in neonatal care through hundreds of peer-reviewed articles and presentations at the VON Quality Congress and other esteemed conferences.

Improve Equity

Health and well-being are largely determined by race, ethnicity, income, immigration status, and local neighborhood. The effects are pronounced for infants in NICU care. VON provides a comprehensive approach that begins before birth and continues into childhood achieving "Follow Through". This involves health professionals, families, and communities as partners to meet the social as well as medical needs of infants and families.

VON has developed 71 practice recommendations to support NICU teams in addressing health equity with Follow Through. Those practices are organized in six categories: Promote a culture of equity; Identify social risks of families and provide interventions to prevent and mitigate those risks; take action to assist families after discharge (transition to home); Maintain support for families through infancy; Develop robust quality improvement efforts to ensure equitable, high-quality hospital and follow through care to all newborns by eliminating modifiable disparities; and, Advocate for social justice at the local, state, and national levels.

Increase Patient Engagement

Infants and families are at the center of everything we do. Every decision we make and every improvement to practices and policies that NICQ teams implement can affect a family for their entire lifetime.

The VON QI collaborative and the teams within it partner with families to ensure the family experience is represented, valued, and enhanced during each improvement cycle. These contributing members bring their lived experience to the team and inform the trajectory of a team's improvement.

Each VON QI topic community includes a Family Leader as a member of the Faculty team, along with the support of the Lead Senior Family Faculty, and expert faculty from The Institute for Patient- and Family-Centered Care.

Enhance Reputation with VON Award for Quality Improvement Excellence

Centers that participate in the current year's VON QI collaborative and in a VON database (very low birthweight – VLBW, or expanded – all infants) are eligible to apply for the annual VON Award for Quality Improvement Excellence. This award will enhance center reputation, attract market share, and contribute to staff recruitment and retention.

Criteria for receiving the award include submission of an improvement poster reporting on the team's QI work with the current VON collaborative, along with other clearly identified requirements. Teams are provided with a checklist, sample application form, and poster development guidance and examples to support successful submissions. Granting the award includes provision of a digital badge, a press kit, celebration of the awarded centers on the VON website and during fall meetings.

Reduce Costs

VON QI has demonstrated the potential for decreasing NICU patient care costs, while also improving quality of care. NICU stays for infants born very preterm are among the most expensive hospital stays (an average of \$262,000 for infants < 32 weeks). For instance, in the VON Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome quality improvement collaborative, length of stay was reduced by 2 days, resulting in cost savings of \$7000 per infant. An early VON collaborative (for chronic lung disease and nosocomial infection) found that each dollar spent by the NICU on QI resulted in 9 dollars in patient cost savings in the year following the QI initiative. Thus, QI can have a large return on investment given the high cost of the patient population in the NICU, while also improving the quality of patient care.

Improve Nurse Retention

After the pandemic, nurse retention has become a critical challenge for hospitals. Retention relies strongly on positive practice environments which are improved by participation in multidisciplinary QI projects. Through these QI initiatives nurses are given decision-making latitude and participate in unit-based decisions, which create positive work environments and reduce nurse turnover.

VON QI collaboratives are all multidisciplinary with key roles for nursing staff. These enable nurses to work to their full potential and provide high quality patient care, key aspects of positive work environments that enhance retention. A conservative estimate of the cost of nursing turnover is \$52,000 per nurse and is likely much

higher for specialized nurses such as those that work in the NICU. Thus, the return on investment from QI initiatives extends to nursing retention, which creates large cost savings for the organization, while simultaneously enabling a high quality of patient care.

References from one page ROI:

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