



Forming Meaningful and Engaging Teams: Keys to Success

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REGINA DEHEN, ND, MAOM, LAC - In late 2014, NCNM Clinic, the primary teaching clinic at the [National College of Natural Medicine](#) (NCNM), made the shift to a team-based care delivery system, a new concept at the naturopathic and Chinese medicine college.

Seven months into the project, we are happy to report we have 30 doctors assigned to five care teams. Our doctors are so engaged that they are introducing the concept to their patients. Here are a few best practices we've followed to develop our teams:

Use A Variety of Communication Styles

To form our five teams, we involved our doctors from the very beginning. We initially drafted teams on the availability of the doctors, the practice preferences, schedules and panel size. After we drafted the initial five teams, we solicited feedback in a variety of ways:

- We posted the teams and asked doctors to come and share their input by moving post-its around.
- We used complimentary electronic services like Mail Chimp and Doodle to ask the doctors about their preferred panel size, schedules and practice



preferences. (Sixty percent of the doctors responded electronically using these tools, and those that did not we tracked down).

After three weeks, we had 100 percent provider feedback on our NCNM care teams.

Provide Protected Time for Team Huddles

Because this concept is new, we scheduled time for our teams to conduct their first huddle during the monthly clinical faculty meeting.



To start off these team meetings, we suggested each team participate in the simple icebreaker “One Lie and a Truth.” Each doctor came up with three facts about themselves; two true and one false. The other team members were encouraged to guess which fact was not true. It made our first official team huddles fun—inspiring laughter and interest.

We also provided each member of every team their team-colored

folder with handouts and worksheets. Having these simple tactile tools help solidify the teams and make the concept real. Developing personalized packets of information is a great way to increase engagement.

Acknowledge Experimentation

Change makes people go above and beyond the call of duty. Recognize that by acknowledging and congratulating all efforts, failed or otherwise. Feedback is based on specific, firsthand observation and should deal with specific situations, observations and real examples, not generalizations.

At the beginning of each NCNM faculty meeting with our naturopathic physicians, we always thank all everyone for their willingness to begin the transition to team-based care. Thank the doctors for their feedback. Thank them for attending team huddles, even if they are mandatory. Appreciate their skepticism. Acknowledging effort with kudos is the secret to forming engaged and meaningful care teams.

Feel free to [contact us](#) at NCNM if you are interested in any of our care team materials - we are happy to share.



As the Chief Medical Officer at NCNM, Dr. Regina Dehen creates and deploys the clinical curriculum, and is responsible for developing clinical policy and procedures. She also establishes clinical quality measures, assesses clinical outcomes, and develops and evaluates competencies for evidence-based clinical judgment.

Dr. Dehen provides oversight of all didactic classes with clinical impact and evaluates and manages clinical supervisors and interns.

In addition to her clinical and teaching responsibilities, Dr. Dehen also facilitates and conducts clinical research. Having participated in the Research Scholars program at both NCNM and Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, and Oregon Health & Science University's Human Investigations Program, Dr. Dehen incorporates research literacy and an evidence-based approach into all of her teaching and administrative duties.