



*Kareen B. Jimenez, MPH, CPHQ
Associate Director of Quality
Improvement and Special Projects*

The Center for Quality Improvement & Innovation (CQII) congratulates Kareen Jimenez, MPH, CPHQ, for her outstanding leadership in quality improvement. We are honored to present her with CQII's 2024 Award for Leadership in Quality Improvement (QI).

Kareen has dedicated over a decade of her professional career to improving the lives of people with HIV through her QI work. In 2015, Kareen joined Montefiore AIDS Center (MAC) as the Manager of QI and Special Projects where she oversees MAC's comprehensive QI program and develops QI projects for each of MAC's key service programs, including HIV primary and specialty care, social work, mental health, and HIV testing. In addition, Kareen serves as the Administrative Director for MAC's Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) Part C grant and provides QI and performance data support to several other grants from the New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH).

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kareen volunteered to support a critical clinical trial of the broad-spectrum antiviral medication Remdesivir, serving as both the Quality Coordinator and Data Entry Specialist for the project. While working full-time in her role and additionally supporting the Remdesivir clinical trial, Kareen successfully earned her credentials as a Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ) from the National Association for Healthcare Quality. In recognition of her significant contributions to enhancing the overall quality of care for those programs at MAC, Kareen was promoted in 2022 to the role of Associate Director of Quality and Special Projects for the department.

In her role as Associate Director of Quality and Special Projects, Kareen leverages her expertise and enthusiasm for quality to support all activities of the MAC QI Committee. Kareen manages a robust data team that includes a Clinical Data Analyst and several Data Entry Specialists to help manage the significant data entry and data analysis needs for her department. The data team helps identify relevant key performance indicators (KPIs) and then provides robust reporting and analyses that allow for monitoring KPIs over time. Additionally, Kareen participates in multiple QI learning collaboratives, including the hospital-wide Montefiore Quality Committee as well as various AIDS Institute, NYC DOHMH, and community-led QI initiatives.

Kareen shared that “...increases in viral suppression rates were the most rewarding aspect of my time in QI...”. The clinic conducted numerous QI projects focusing on improving viral suppression rates in innovative ways including case conferencing and administering a social determinants of health (SDOH) screening, among others. She attributes her successes to team efforts and strong leadership support. Kareen elaborated that “...the QI team is comprised of individuals who are both supportive and innovative, coming together to create the necessary group effort.” She emphasized the importance of studying performance data to identify areas

where QI is truly needed. Conducting ongoing chart reviews helped Karen gather data as evidence to obtain buy-in from front line staff and leadership and was key to turning the insights into actionable QI initiatives. The leadership at her clinic is always interested in analyzing trends over time to identify subpopulations in need and understands the importance of trying different approaches to find what works best.

One of the impacts across programs within MAC was Karen’s focus on developing actionable QI plans that helped sustain a viral suppression rate of over 85%. Karen’s work leading the HIV Testing & Linkage Team resulted in MAC achieving remarkable success linking newly diagnosed clients to HIV primary care with an improvement from 47% in 2021 to 60% in 2024 for newly diagnosed clients linked to care within seven days. The chart below outlines the Quality Improvement Initiatives for MAC in 2024, supported by Karen. These initiatives include implementing SDOH screening, developing workflows and policies for data collection, analysis, and reporting, and revamping the structure of QI committee meetings.



When asked what advice she would give to someone just starting out in QI, Karen shared that “change takes time.” She noted that “sometimes it can be easy to get caught up in the numbers while looking at data.” However, she emphasizes the importance of remembering that every number is a person with a story and with needs.

“Although QI leaders are not necessarily doctors, our work matters. We tell the clinicians what would make a visit more meaningful, to make the patient experience better.”

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