

Development of an Echocardiographic Quality Improvement and Accreditation Process through a successful government-medical collaboration

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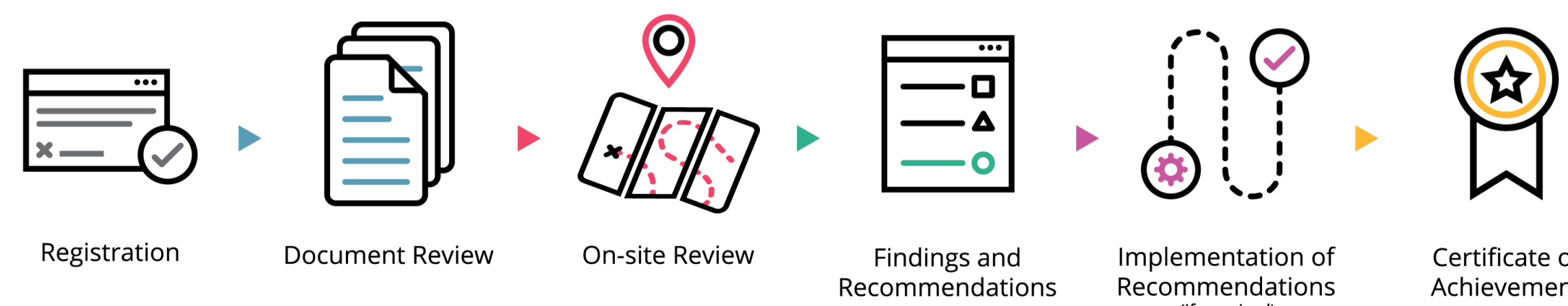
1 - Echocardiography Quality Improvement Program Advisory Committee; 2 - CorHealth Ontario; 3 - Provincial Programs Branch, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; 4 - Ontario Association of Cardiologists.

BACKGROUND

Echocardiography (echo) is a frequently used diagnostic test in Ontario with significant implications for clinical care, patient outcomes, and health system costs. To help ensure quality echo services, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) and Ontario Medical Association (OMA) convened the Hospital Outpatient and Community-based Echocardiography Working Group, whose recommendations subsequently resulted in CorHealth Ontario releasing the Standards for Provision of Echocardiography in Ontario. Along with the Standards, and in collaboration with the MOHLTC and the Ontario Association of Cardiologists (OAC), CorHealth Ontario launched the Echo Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) in 2013, a process designed to ensure that echo facilities practice according to the Standards.

METHODS

The core elements of the EQIP include an echo facility site visit along with process and case reviews. The case review is initiated on site by specially trained Sonographer Reviewers. When additional feedback is required cases are securely submitted and de-identified for review by specially trained Cardiologist-Echographer Reviewers. To facilitate quality improvement in alignment with the Standards, detailed and meaningful feedback is provided in a consistent and structured format.



RESULTS

In April 2016 participation in the EQIP became a requirement for physician payment from the Ontario Health Insurance Program. Working with the Ontario Association of Cardiologists (OAC) and the MOHLTC, the EQIP developed consistent, objective, and transparent processes and reporting requirements to address the shared desire for accountability and quality. As of August 30, 2018, 910 out of 1045 operational echo facilities have been reviewed. Of those 910 sites, 355 have been found to be non-operational. 107 of the reviewed echo sites facilities are implementing approved Action Items in their Quality Improvement Plans. 202 of the reviewed echo facilities sites have completed quality improvements and achieved accreditation.

As a result of the Standards, scheduling a Site Visit and/or issuing a Report:

- 9 Sites decided to voluntarily narrow the scope of services they offer their patients (e.g., Stress Echocardiography is no longer being performed)
 - o 3 of the above decisions were made following the Site Visit
- 17 Sites decided to voluntarily not offer any echocardiography services
 - o 8 of the above decisions made following a Site Visit
 - o 1 decision made following a Critical Report

Billing privileges have been revoked by the MOHLTC for 2 echo labs (6 sites) as a result of the program.

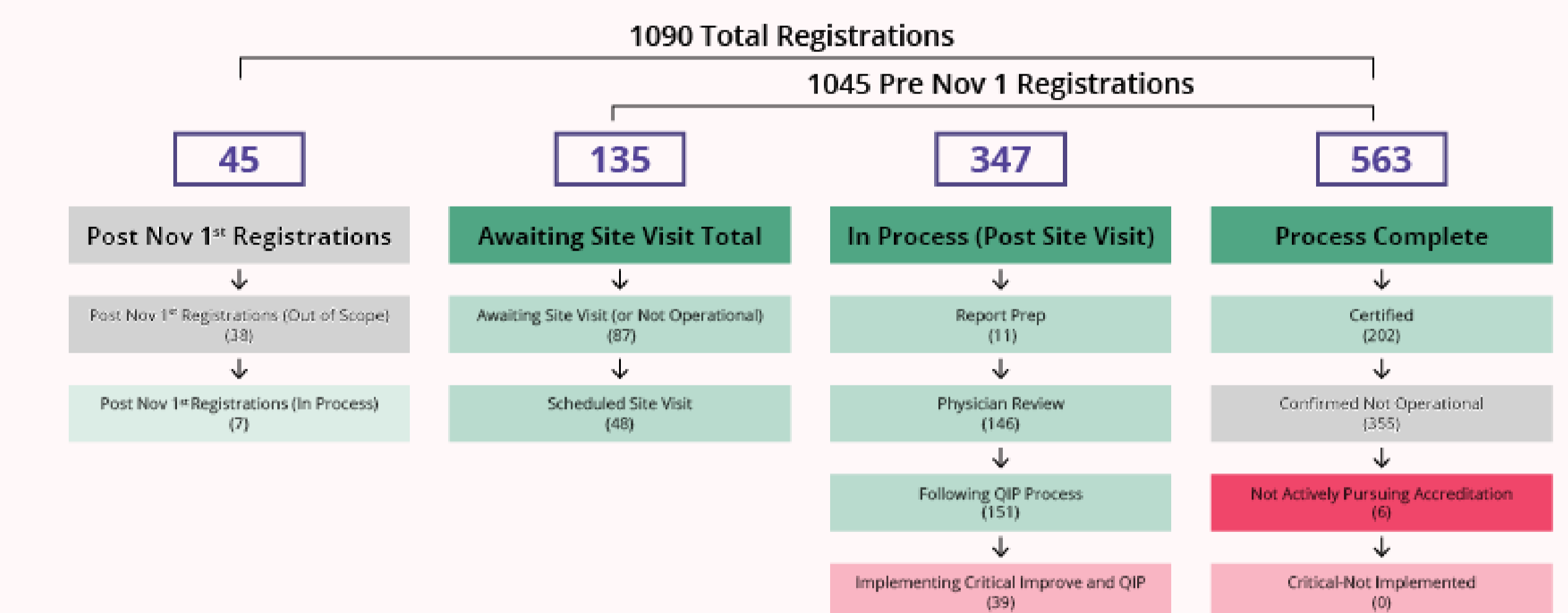
Ongoing success is dependent on continued collaboration to resolve issues such as:

- o Utilization and its economic impact
- o Expansion of clinical applications and technological advancements
- o Unclear indications

CONCLUSIONS

The success of the EQIP to date demonstrates the value of government-medical collaboration to improve the quality of echo services across both publicly funded hospitals and independent physician practices in Ontario. The benefits arising from the collaborative effort is positively impacting clinical decision-making and patient care and could serve as a foundation for similar diagnostic quality improvement initiatives.

Program Update: Sites' Progress



REFERENCES

1 CorHealth Ontario. Standards for Provision of Echocardiography in Canada. April 2015

DISCLOSURES

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NO YES