

Nerd Night in Kootenay Boundary: Breaking isolation through shared data, dinner, and genuine curiosity

Physicians work hard to improve care while navigating significant administrative load and burnout.

Reimagining how we work and practicing continuous quality improvement is widely valued; however, it also requires time, energy, and a willingness to engage with data, even when there is limited capacity to act on what it reveals. This tension can create a sense of isolation, even in highly collaborative communities. It's out of that tension that a new approach was born.

The idea for "Nerd Night" started with Dr. Janet Fisher in the Kootenay Boundary Division of Family Practice.

Through her involvement in earlier Measurement System for Physician Quality Improvement (MSPQI) community sessions, Dr. Fisher saw the value of structured quality improvement. She also noticed that the most meaningful conversations began after the formal session ended. Once the PowerPoint slides were closed, clinicians spoke more openly about what was happening in their practices.

Dr. Fisher saw an opportunity to create space for that kind of conversation from the start, something that felt useful, relevant, and grounded in the realities of day-to-day care.

Bringing that idea to life required coordination: pulling data, identifying a meaningful focus, and organizing an evening that feels worthy of leaving the house.

That's when HDC stepped in.



"It is inspiring to see that there are more people interested in data than you would think, especially when it does not feel like extra work."
- Dr. Janet Fisher

A common language across Electronic Medical Records (EMR)

The Health Data Coalition's HDC Discover application provides shared, aggregate data that focuses on patient care. By aggregating EMR data across systems and standardizing clinical measures, HDC Discover creates a common language for clinicians.

This allows physicians to look at patterns across practices, share experiences, and learn from one another without fear of judgement. The data becomes a starting point for conversation, not a measure of performance.

Working alongside Dr. Fisher, HDC Clinical Services Manager, Frank Fabian supported the early sessions by clearly describing relevant measures, preparing accessible data views, and shaping the structure of the evening. His role ensured the data felt usable and grounded in clinical reality, while leaving space for physicians to lead the conversation.

What Nerd Night looks like in practice

The first Nerd Night brought together physicians from three clinics across the region.

The shared dinner and relaxed environment set



the tone for the evening. Music hummed in the background, plates were passed, and conversations moved easily between clinical practice and life outside of work. And then soon enough, printouts of select HDC Discover clinical measures were also passed in between plates, which lightly guided the conversation, giving the group a clear starting point without over-directing it.

There was no pressure to perform; no one felt the need to defend or explain their numbers. Data sat on the table as a shared reference point that helped spark conversation and surface insights.

Curiosity quickly took over as physicians moved beyond opinions and into shared understanding, looking at the same measures and talking openly about how care happens in their clinics.

From Conversation to Clinical Action

In one session, the group took a closer look at Heart Failure indicators. As they reviewed the data together, a pattern emerged. Medication optimization was strong across clinics, yet Ejection Fraction (EF) was not consistently captured in a way that could be used for clinical decision support.

The information often existed in consult reports but was not entered into discrete EMR fields. That small gap had real implications. Without visible EF data, it is harder to fully use the range of evidence-based therapies available.

The conversation quickly shifted from observation to action. Physicians discussed simple changes to documentation habits, ways to bring EF into structured fields, and how that visibility could support more precise prescribing over time.

What made the difference was not the metric itself. It was the shared space to notice it, talk it through, and leave with something practical to try.

Why this model works

Small group learning has long supported quality improvement. It creates space to reflect, share, and learn from one another. Nerd Night builds on that model by shifting what brings people into the room.

The focus is connection first. The music, food, and setting are part of the design; creating an environment that feels worth leaving the house for.

Physicians arrive as colleagues, sharing experiences, comparing patterns, and talking openly about the realities of care in their practices. Insights and feasible solutions follow naturally, grounded in real-world context and shaped through discussion.

For those interested in trying something similar:

1. Gather a small group of colleagues interested in practice improvement
2. Explore sessional support through your Division for time and food
3. Connect with your HDC Clinical Services Manager to identify relevant data themes
4. Set a tone that prioritizes connection, curiosity, and shared experience
5. Capture key takeaways and revisit them together

As Dr. Janet Fisher reflects: “The biggest gold has been using data as a starting point for discussing how we practice, the different EMRs, and learning tips and tricks. It is inspiring to see that there are more people interested in data than you would think, especially when it does not feel like extra work.”

Want support to start a Nerd Night in your community?

Nerd Night shows what is possible when clinicians are given the space to engage with data together. Curiosity grows through connection, and shared learning. Sometimes it starts with something simple. A table, a meal, and a group of peers willing to explore how care can improve.

HDC can support communities interested in creating their own version of Nerd Night. For more information or to get started, contact info@hdcbc.ca.



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