CFI was launched in 2008 as an institutionwide expansion of the SPARC Innovation Program. Through SPARC (Solve-Plan-Act-Refine-Communicate), Mayo Clinic’s Department of Medicine had successfully designed, prototyped, and implemented a number of patient-centered care innovations in the outpatient setting.

Since its launch, CFI has completed more than 100 projects working in close collaboration with departments throughout Mayo Clinic. Projects are focused around four primary goals, or platforms: Practice Redesign, Community Health Transformation, Care-at-a-Distance, and Future Works. Projects include innovations in healthcare delivery using digital communication platforms, community healthcare, patient safety in hospital intensive care units, redesigning exam rooms, electronic medical records, medical devices, and more.

CFI teams up researchers, designers, strategists, and engineers with physicians and operations staff members to understand patient needs and match those needs with what is technologically feasible. The facility includes an outpatient lab in which patients can be observed as they interact with providers in the clinical setting; a Healthy Aging and Independent Living (HAIL) Lab; and spaces for prototyping, workshops, and classes.

Consistent with Mayo Clinic’s dual leadership structure, CFI is led by Medical Director Nicholas LaRusso, MD, in partnership with Administrative Director Barbara Spurrier. CFI employs nearly 60 individuals, some hired directly by the center and others assigned to other departments, such as communications, finance, human resources, or public affairs, but dedicated to CFI.

LaRusso notes, however, that innovation is really everyone’s job. “No one individual is the source or fount of innovation,” he says. “We view innovation as a discipline that can be taught. Our goal is for everyone in the organization to understand the discipline of innovation and contribute to the work being done.”

As medical director of CFI, LaRusso’s role is to nurture, facilitate, accelerate, and educate on the power of design thinking and innovation. “CFI makes tools and resources available to every individual in the organization to facilitate the identification and manifestation of ideas,” says LaRusso.

“We identify broad areas of activities—around our platforms and in alignment with the institution—and encourage people to come up with ideas that advance those areas. We have a curriculum for educating people about how to innovate. Through structured classes and workshops, we teach the disciplines of brainstorming and design thinking. We also use software and web-based tools to help employees collaborate, communicate, and build on each other’s ideas, always focused on transforming patient care experiences.”

Stories are also used to teach. “One of the greatest ways we diffuse the culture of innovation is by sharing stories about what we’ve accomplished,” LaRusso adds. For instance, a CFI team member who works in public affairs regularly shares stories in her department’s regular weekly meetings as well as in internal and external communications.

“Stories help people learn very visibly,” says LaRusso. “People can see applications that have already been developed that are relevant to projects they are working on and consider what lessons they offer.”

Sharing stories extends outside the walls of Mayo Clinic as well. Each year, CFI hosts an annual Transform Symposium. The event brings together leaders from various industries to discuss innovation in healthcare delivery. “As an academic medical center, we have an obligation to partner with others inside and outside the healthcare industry to develop optimal models of care centered around the needs of patients,” notes LaRusso. “The symposium is an opportunity to not only share what we are doing, but also to bring in ideas from other people and organizations, some of whom may become external collaborators or members of CFI’s external advisory board.”

Source

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