

# Executive Comments



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## Is Your Practice a Medical Home?

By now you have already had a chance to peruse the patient-centered, physician-directed medical home materials in the last issue of *The Ohio Family Physician*. Hopefully, you have hung the medical home poster in your office waiting room, downloaded the poster for your exam rooms and clicked through to the medical home information on the Ohio Academy of Family Physicians (OAFP) Web site, [www.ohioafp.org/medicalhome](http://www.ohioafp.org/medicalhome).

The medical home poster and related materials created quite a stir, which is exactly what we had hoped. Some called immediately to ask for additional posters. A few called to say that they just did not get it—family physicians have always been medical homes—why are we talking about transforming practices into the medical home model? Several called to let us know what efforts are being made in various regions of the state to launch medical home pilots. All of these reactions, though varied, are good—we got people thinking and talking about the medical home.

Realizing that one of our biggest, immediate challenges would be educating family physicians about the medical home model, we targeted OAFP members first. I know that sounds strange because the family medicine tradition has long advocated that every patient have a personal physician. But when we talk about this patient-centered, physician-directed medical home, we mean much more than the medical home in the traditional sense. This medical home has evolved into a practice team that incorporates electronic health records, utilizes group and e-visits, offers enhanced access through open access scheduling and evening and weekend hours, and provides a physician-led team of healthcare professionals who work with patients as partners to prevent illness, improve health and manage chronic disease, as well as tend to episodic care needs. In this evolved model of care, well care based on prevention, intervention, disease management and innovation is valued, appropriately reimbursed and viewed to be just as essential as sick care.

Certainly OAFP wants to educate the public about the medical home model because we understand, and evidence shows, that under such a model healthcare outcomes improve and healthcare costs decrease. With improved outcomes and decreased cost, who would not want a medical home? But before patients and employers, who are purchasing coverage for employees, start clamoring for medical homes, we must ensure that this model of care is readily available through transformation of existing family physician practices.

Yes, it is a bit of a “Field of Dreams build it and they will come” dilemma. Certainly, the value of such a model of care

must be recognized in order to make the costs of practice transformation worthwhile or even feasible.

So as we strive to educate and help family physicians transform their practices to patient-centered, physician-directed medical homes, OAFP will also be trying to educate state legislators as to the value of such a model of care. With the cooperation of the member organizations of Ohio Coalition of Primary Care Physicians, a new publication, *Why Ohioans Deserve a Medical Home*, is being mailed to every member of the Ohio General Assembly and federal legislators. Within this publication, OAFP and the other Coalition members will advocate that the state of Ohio should:

- Support medical home pilot projects that seek to transform our current health system from sick care to a well care system that is based on prevention, intervention and innovation
- Recognize the value of preventing chronic disease and managing chronic care and value it by actually paying for it (understanding that sometimes these services will be offered outside the more traditional, face-to-face office visit)
- Value and pay for the primary care physician’s coordination of care services between subspecialists, hospitals and other community resources
- Support and provide financial incentives to physicians so that they can implement and use health information technology
- Provide incentives to physicians who achieve measurable and continuous quality improvements in their practices and who reduce hospitalizations through provided care
- Support the education of primary care physicians and provide financial incentives for physicians who choose to go into primary care, stay in Ohio and offer a patient-centered, physician-directed medical home to their patients.

To take a look at this publication or to download it for use in your meetings with legislators, go to <http://www.ohioafp.org/medicalhome/promotion.php>. To request a hard copy, please call the OAFP office at (800) 742-7327 or send an e-mail to [news@ohioafp.org](mailto:news@ohioafp.org).

In the meantime, keep us posted on what you are doing. Let us know about medical home pilots in your area so we can help facilitate communication between those pilots. All OAFP members will receive an e-survey on the medical home in January. Tell us what we can do to help you transform your practice to this new patient-centered, physician-directed medical home model. Share with us what resources have been particularly helpful and what additional information you may need on this topic. Create a stir by letting us know what you think.