

# Invest in Primary Care Physicians

A Workforce with Demonstrated Value and Proven Outcomes

Primary care physicians (the majority of whom are family physicians) deliver the patient-centered medical home model of care we need.

- The patient-centered medical home (PCMH) model is being actively embraced at both the state and national level as an important cornerstone of healthcare reform.
- In the PCMH model, care for patients is best served by a multidisciplinary team where the clinical team is led by a physician.

Advanced practice nurses (APNs) would have you believe they are the answer to the shortage of primary care providers. While APNs are an important part of the primary care team, they don't provide the solution to workforce shortages.

## Not a Turf Issue

If all APNs and physician assistants (PAs) practiced autonomously, we would still have a primary care workforce shortage.

- Workforce effect of family physicians is far superior to that of other primary care providers – to produce the same workforce effect as one family physician the nation would need to graduate at least 2.15 APNs or 2.36 PAs. (Source: Robert C. Bowman)
- The volume of primary care patients seen by APNs is half the volume of patients seen by a family physician. The volume of primary care patients seen by nurse practitioners is 67% of the volume seen by a physician assistant. The volume of primary care patients seen by a physician assistant is 75% of the volume seen by a family physician. (Source: Larson, Hart, Ballweg)
- APNs claim to fill healthcare gaps in areas underserved by physicians although no research exists to substantiate this claim. Studies do confirm that family physicians tend to distribute themselves to underserved, rural and inner city areas in larger numbers than do physicians in other specialties.



## A patient safety issue - not a turf battle

- Physicians and APNs complete their education and training with different types and levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities that are not equivalent but may be complementary.



*In the Patient-Centered Medical Home Model, care for patients is best served by a multidisciplinary team where the clinical team is led by a physician.*

- The training of an APN is more equivalent to that of a third year medical student than a primary care physician who has completed four years of medical school and a three year residency program.
- Patients with complex problems, multiple diagnoses, undiagnosed conditions, or difficult management challenges are best served by physicians working with a team of health care professionals that may include APNs, physician assistants, and other clinical team members (e.g., nurses, pharmacists, medical assistants, educators).
- APNs in Ohio have collaborative agreements with physicians. Under terms of the collaborative agreement, the physician is ultimately responsible for the patient's diagnosis and treatment; patient access should be through the collaborating physician.

Provided by: Ohio Academy of Family Physicians

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