



August 15, 2023

Marc Meisnere
Senior Program Officer
Health and Medicine Division
National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine
500 Fifth St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Meisnere:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to share our concerns with the provisional committee appointments to the National Academies Standing Committee on Primary Care. As you likely know, ACP was a sponsor of the Committee on Implementing High-Quality Primary Care; and we have advocated for many of the policy recommendations included in the 2021 report, *Implementing High-Quality Care: Rebuilding the Foundation of Health Care*. The College is also supportive of the Initiative for Strengthening Primary Health Care and other opportunities for increasing investments in primary care across the federal government. However, we believe that the limited representation of internal medicine physicians on the Standing Committee on Primary Care, as reflected in the provisional appointments, will limit the committee's ability to effectively inform this work.

ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 160,000 internal medicine physicians, related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. They are experts in complexity who serve and lead in many diverse roles and settings. Our expertise makes us vital to both patients and medical professionals.

Internal medicine physicians are the foundation of clinical care, providing longitudinal, comprehensive care for patients throughout their health care journey. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) *2022 Physician Specialty Data Report*, internal medicine is the specialty with the largest number of active physicians specializing in primary care. In 2021, 120,342 internal medicine physicians were identified as specializing in primary care, followed by family medicine/general practice with 118,641, and pediatrics with 60,305¹. Yet, there are only two internal medicine physicians included in provisional committee appointments.

¹ <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/workforce/data/2022-physician-specialty-report-data-highlights>

Internal medicine physicians have also been at the forefront of innovations in primary care. This continuum traces from the development of the Patient-Centered Medical Home, which has provided inspiration for many value-based models of care, through the recently proposed Making Care Primary model, all of which rely heavily on input and participation from internal medicine physicians.

In addition to greater inclusion of internal medicine physicians, the National Academies Standing Committee on Primary Care also needs to balance the participation of physicians in academic medicine with those in clinical practice, particularly in a community setting. Committee input must have a practical focus that is oriented around ensuring continuity of patient access to their primary care physician and the viability of physicians' practices. Therefore, the committee must be able to rely on the practical real-world experiences of its members and not just be an organized academic review of existing literature.

ACP stands ready to work with you to ensure that there is a robust and vigorous effort to improve primary care delivery for the benefits of all patients and clinicians in the United States. We hope that you will adopt our feedback and finalize committee appointments that are a more accurate reflection of the active primary care workforce. Please contact David Pugach, Vice President, Governmental Affairs and Public Policy, at dpugach@acponline.org, if we can assist in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Omar Atiq". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Omar T. Atiq, MD, FACP
President

CC: Victor J. Dzau, MD, President, National Academy of Medicine