



Excerpted from ACP Policy Compendium

INTERNAL MEDICINE

The Evolving Role of the Internal Medicine Specialist

ACP envisions the role of the Internal Medicine Specialist as a comprehensive provider for the health needs of adults and reaffirms several fundamental characteristics of general internists. Although several of these are features of other generalist disciplines, others distinguish the Internal Medicine Specialist from other physicians who provide comprehensive care to adults. Not every general internist actively partakes in every feature, but potential responsibilities for the evolving role of the Internal Medicine Specialist will include one or more of the following:

1. A primary care physician: the patient's first contact and a provider of comprehensive continuing evidence-based care that involves the development and maintenance of a sustained and trusting patient-physician relationship.
2. A physician who evaluates and manages all aspects of illness-biomedical and psychosocial-in the whole patient.
3. An expert in evidence-based disease prevention and management, early detection of disease, and health promotion.
4. The patient's guide and advocate in a complex health care environment.
5. An expert diagnostician who treats and manages chronically ill patients with one or multiple complex and interactive illnesses.
6. A consultant when patients have difficult, undifferentiated problems or when the general internist has special expertise to apply to their problems.
7. A resource manager and administrator of health care who is familiar with the science of clinical epidemiology and evidence-based medicine and can bring a thoughtful, cost-effective practice style to evaluation and management.
8. A clinical information manager who can take full advantage of health information technology.
9. A generalist in outlook and team leader in the healthcare environment who also possesses special skills that respond to the needs of a particular care environment.
10. An administrator, researcher, and educator who expands the medical knowledge base.
11. A leader in the area of quality improvement. (BoR 05)

Resolution Recognizing Geriatrics as a Primary Care Discipline

ACP adopted a resolution of the American Geriatric Society that had been adopted by the AMA House of Delegates. ACP recommends that:

Geriatric medicine be recognized as a primary care discipline and supports the inclusion of geriatric medicine in the AMA definition of primary care, as a means to increase training opportunities in geriatric medicine and enhance physician education and participation in the delivery of primary care services to

older adults. (American Geriatrics Society, AMA House of Delegates Resolution, ACP, 1994; reaffirmed BoR 04)

Promoting Internal Medicine*

ACP encourages individual internists to participate in activities in their communities which promote the specialty of internal medicine, particularly primary care internal medicine. Such activities include providing ambulatory, office-based mentorships for medical students; offering to counsel and/or provide on-the-job experience to bright, young high school and college students with an interest in becoming physicians (such as in one's office or at high school career days or job fairs); and being a spokesperson to promote the specialty whenever possible. (HoD 92; reaffirmed BoR 04)

Definition of Internist

Internists are physicians that specialize in the prevention, detection and treatment of illness in adults. Internal medicine physicians include specialists and subspecialists with advanced training who possess a wide variety of clinical knowledge and skills, and who are able to deliver comprehensive and consultative care to patients with various chronic and acute conditions. ACP will incorporate this definition of internists in the ACP Vision for 2015 statement and, as appropriate, in its communications and publications with interested parties, including the U.S. Congress, the American public and other advocacy organizations. (BoR 10)

***ACP policy originating from ACP sponsored resolution introduced to the AMA House of Delegates**