Primary Care Physicians Call for Medical School Curricula That Prepare Graduates for Patient-Centered Medical Home

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WASHINGTON — America’s primary care physicians today released the “Joint Principles for the Medical Education of Physicians as Preparation for Practice in the Patient-Centered Medical Home.” The principles will guide medical school curricula in ensuring that all physicians, regardless of their specialty choice, will have the expertise to practice in a reformed health care delivery system based on the patient-centered medical home.

The four groups — the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians and the American Osteopathic Association — represent more than 350,000 physicians who provide most of the primary medical care to children, adolescents and adults in the United States.

“The patient-centered medical home model is a significantly improved way to provide individualized care to patients,” said Roland Goertz, MD, MBA, president of the American Academy of Family Physicians. “It involves leading a team of health professionals, redesigning patient access issues, improving practice efficiencies and using innovations in information technology. These joint principles will guide medical schools in ensuring that tomorrow’s physicians have the skills to provide the full array of services in the patient-centered medical home.”

O. Marion Burton, MD, FAAP, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, also stressed the importance of early medical student education regarding medical home principles. “It has been shown that appropriate family-centered partnerships within a team-based medical home — with care coordination when needed — provide better outcomes, improved value and increased satisfaction for patients and their families, as well as for the physicians and providers who care for them.”
J. Fred Ralston, Jr., MD, FACP, president of the American College of Physicians, agreed. “A focus on optimizing the way that care is delivered has not traditionally been part of the medical school experience,” he said. “These principles put an appropriate emphasis on students’ becoming familiar with the patient-centered medical home model of coordinated, team-based care at an early stage during their education and training.”

The joint principles demonstrate that primary care physicians are united in their support of curricula that ensure future physicians will have the skills to provide high-quality, accessible care in a patient-centered medical home, according to Karen J. Nichols, DO, president of the American Osteopathic Association.

“The AOA is honored to join with these groups in support of these principles. This effort strives to ensure that the basic tenants of the patient-centered medical home are incorporated into the education of all future physicians,” she said. “These organizations, representing a majority of the nation’s primary care physicians, have unified behind these principles signaling our long-term belief in the viability of the patient-centered medical home and its ability to improve the health of patients and the viability of the health care delivery system.”

The principles are geared to ensure medical students understand and can act on all of the elements that comprise the medical home, including:

- Leadership within the health care team, the health care community and the community at large;
- Communication that enhances care coordination among all members of the health care team and the patient’s family;
- Coordination that helps patients navigate the complex health care system and take advantage of community resources; and
- Use of evidence-based medicine and clinical support tools, quality improvement and performance measurement, and health information technology that supports patient care, patient access, and communication.

The term “medical home” was introduced to health care in the 1960s by the American Academy of Pediatrics. In 1992, the AAP formally defined the concept as a model that provides comprehensive and coordinated care for children with special health care needs. Adapted for use for all patients, the PCMH has been shown to improve the quality of patient care, ensure coordination of preventive, diagnostic and treatment services, reduce fragmentation and duplication, and help control the cost of care.

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**About the American Academy of Family Physicians**

Founded in 1947, the AAFP represents 97,600 physicians and medical students nationwide. It is the only medical society devoted solely to primary care.

Approximately one in four of all office visits are made to family physicians. That is 228 million office visits each year — nearly 84 million more than the next largest medical specialty. Today, family physicians provide more care for America’s underserved and rural populations than any other medical specialty. Family medicine’s cornerstone is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care.

To learn more about the specialty of family medicine, the AAFP’s positions on issues and clinical care, and for downloadable multi-media highlighting family medicine, visit
www.aafp.org/media. For information about health care, health conditions and wellness, please visit the AAFP’s award-winning consumer website, www.FamilyDoctor.org.

About the American Academy of Pediatrics
The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit www.aap.org.

About the American College of Physicians
The American College of Physicians (www.acponline.org) is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 130,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internists specialize in the prevention, detection, and treatment of illness in adults. Follow ACP on Twitter (www.twitter.com/acpinternists) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/acpinternists).

About the American Osteopathic Association
The American Osteopathic Association proudly represents more than 70,000 osteopathic physicians (D.O.s) practicing in 31 specialties and subspecialties; promotes public health; encourages scientific research; serves as the primary certifying body for D.O.s; is the accrediting agency for osteopathic medical colleges; and has federal authority to accredit hospitals and other health care facilities. More information on D.O.s/osteopathic medicine can be found at www.osteopathic.org.