

Patient-Centered Medical Home – Engaging Patients and Families – Benefits for Physician Practices

Many physician organizations and practices are in some phase of implementing a Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH). Based on the report, *Benefits of Implementing the Primary Care Patient-Centered Medical Home: Review of Cost & Quality Results, 2012*, from the Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative, “the PCMH improves health outcomes, enhances the patient experience of care and reduces expensive, unnecessary hospital and ED care.”¹ Triple Aim outcomes are being achieved in many early adopter sites. Major insurers are driving efforts nationwide including Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and UnitedHealthcare. Many organizations believe investment in the PCMH offers both short and long-term savings for patients, employers, health plans, and policymakers.

Did you know these positive outcomes can be substantially accelerated through patient- and family-centered care practices? This is especially true when patients and families are involved in quality improvement and redesign efforts.

The following studies and the opinions of international health care leaders provide evidence of these benefits:

- Based on almost 7 years of experience with PCMH collaboratives, McCallister and colleagues reported that “family-centered care with parents as improvement partners” was one of the most significant drivers for transformation.²
- In a large-scale implementation of PCMH concepts in the VA, among the steps identified as critical to establishing successful medical homes was “engaging patients and other key stakeholders in redesigning care processes...”³
- In a study of 112 primary care practices, Han and colleagues suggested that while only 33% involve patients in quality improvement, those that do, experience significant benefits. They reported: “These practices stated that robust patient involvement in every aspect of the practice, including designing effective patient engagement strategies, positively affected the way in which patients and families interacted with physicians and staff, supporting stronger relationships and enabling patients to feel more empowered to become active partners in their care.”⁴
- According to Don Berwick, MD, “The most direct route to the Triple Aim is via patient- and family-centered care in its fullest form.”⁵
- The Joint Principles for the Patient-Centered Medical Home explicitly call for partnerships with patients and families in quality improvement efforts.⁶
- In their commentary about factors that are critical to creating medical homes, Homer and Baron noted: “In our experience, the unique perspective that family members bring refocuses transformation efforts away from provider concerns and toward bringing value for families and patients.”⁷
- Lucian Leape and other thought leaders embrace partnerships as an effective approach to health care redesign. “We envisage patients as essential and respected partners in their own care and in the design and execution of all aspects of healthcare. In this new world of healthcare: Organizations publicly and consistently affirm the centrality of patient- and family-centered care. They seek out patients, listen to them, hear their stories, are open and honest with them, and take action with them.”⁸

Active Participation Yields Insights:

Key clinical champions and leaders cite the unique contributions that these advisors provide to their practices:

- Bring important perspectives often missing in typical implementation initiatives.
- Share how systems really work for patients and families.
- Keep staff grounded in reality and open to change.
- Provide timely feedback and ideas.
- Inspire and energize staff.
- Lessen the burden on staff to fix the problems...staff do not have to have all the answers.
- Bring connections with the community.
- Offer an opportunity to “give back.”

Patients report they often find their own health and self-management improves from this new way of participating in healthcare. Oswaldo Davila, a patient advisor for a federally qualified health center remarked: “I want to thank the Council for having me part of this work. When I share information about the changes we are making at the clinic with

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my family and friends in the community, I feel better about myself as a diabetic trying to manage my condition."

What Is Patient- and Family- Centered Care?

Patient- and family-centered care is an approach to the planning, delivery, and evaluation of health care that is grounded in mutually beneficial partnerships among health care providers, patients, and families. It redefines the relationships in health care by placing an emphasis on collaborating with patients, residents, and families of all ages, at all levels of care, and in all health care settings. The four core concepts are:

- People are treated with respect and dignity.
- Health care providers communicate and share complete and unbiased information with patients and families in ways that are affirming and useful.
- Patients and families are encouraged and supported in participating in care and decision-making at the level they choose.
- Collaboration among patients, families, and providers occurs in policy and program development and professional education, as well as in the delivery of care.

Patient- and family-centered care is working with patients and families, rather than just doing to or for them.

Through Patient- and Family-Centered care, patient engagement occurs at all levels:

- At the clinical encounter...patient and family engagement in direct care, care planning, and decision-making.
- At the practice or organizational level, patient and family engagement in quality improvement and health care redesign.
- At the community level, bringing together community resources with health care organizations, patients, and families.
- At policy levels locally, regionally, and nationally.

References

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