The Medical Home Model
An Opportunity for Osteopathic Family Practice

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Abstract

The US healthcare system is increasingly fragmented and expensive. Health care is poorly coordinated between providers, and reimbursement favors increased physician sub-specialization and procedures over preventive medicine and disease management. Not only are new graduates fleeing primary care, but current primary care physicians are getting older, and projections suggest significant shortages in the not too distant future. Primary care physicians have begun to question their relevance in the future of healthcare.

The Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) report *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century*, argued for an overhaul of health care with an emphasis on safety, effectiveness, patient-centeredness, timeliness, and efficiency. The IOM report stressed the importance of primary care as a fundamental aspect of a viable health care system. Physician organizations re-evaluating primary care have embraced the concept of the Medical Home Model (MHM) as a vehicle to achieve the goals of the IOM report. In an environment where change in the healthcare system is incremental at best, the MHM can improve the value of delivered services and influence market and public funding for those services. A value-driven reform of primary care could catalyze change throughout the health care system as a whole.

Osteopathic family physicians are unique in that they are poised to provide additional value to their patients due to their holistic approach and training in osteopathic manipulative medicine. The MHM would be a natural fit for the osteopathic physician and measured outcomes would provide comparisons with other provider types. Integration of MHM and osteopathic medicine could further raise the profile of the profession in the public eye.