

Primary Care and the Patient-Centered Medical Home: The Evidence for Decreased Disparities and Improved Population Health

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Abstract: Public health has a long history of inadequate funding yet provides substantial improvement for the health of Washington and the US in general. Should supporting primary care, and specifically medical homes, be a public health issue? Before answering this question, a review of the health outcomes data and primary care will be established. The primary care and medical home arguments and stakeholders will be discussed. The national medical home movement will be summarized, and the medical home model will be contrasted with “good enough” primary care. Health care leaders in the Obama administration support the medical home model and primary care organizations including the American Academy of Family Practice, the American Academy of Pediatrics and American College of Physicians are lobbying hard to support the medical home. The current work in Washington State to improve primary care outcomes through collaborative work on patient-centered medical homes will be discussed, as well as early evidence from several projects in our state. In a report called “Closing the Divide: How Medical Homes Promote Equity in Health Care”, a survey of more than 2,6000 people describes the factors that improve health care among racial minority and low income patients. Through several mechanisms, this research discovered that a patient-centered medical home leads to better management of chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension and helps eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health care. We will review this important data that will undoubtedly have a big impact on the future of primary care delivery. Supporting primary care as a public health issue should be encouraged based on improved health outcomes if primary care and the medical home model can adhere to the mission of public health such as fairness, equity, and prevention. Public health organizations and primary care organizations need to discuss common areas of interest, which includes primary care delivery for all citizens.