



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

November 7, 2013

Gene L. Dodaro, Comptroller
Government Accountability Office (Health Care)
Attention: Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute
441 G Street NW.
Washington, DC 20548
Sent via electronic mail

Dear Mr. Dadaro:

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 110,600 family physicians and medical students across the country, appreciates the opportunity to nominate the following family physicians for consideration for the single vacancy on the Board of Governors on Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). We are pleased to nominate Theodore G. Ganiats, MD, Joseph E. Scherger, MD, MPH, and Eric Wall, MD, MPH.

The AAFP strongly urges GAO to include a family physician on the PCORI Board of Governors for several reasons. Primarily, nearly one in four of all office visits are made to family physicians. That is 208 million office visits each year – nearly 83 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.

Second, in our increasingly fragmented world of health care, family physicians are dedicated to treating the whole person, across the full spectrum of conditions, setting and ages. The cornerstone of family medicine is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care. As a result, since family physicians have such a comprehensive and continuing relationship with their patients over time, having one or more of them on this entity will assure that the Board seeks information that will impact patients over their lifetimes as their health profiles change.

Third, our nominees not only are nationally known in the research field, but also have practiced or taught family medicine. These individuals have real-world perspectives on how difficult it is to use research to determine the best response to a complex patient with several comorbidities. Comparative effectiveness research is critically important to our members – family physicians see patients with common problems every day for which there is no solid clinical evidence.

Finally, family physicians are performing research in collaboration with hundreds of family physicians and other primary care physicians. The goal of the project is to show that

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networks of practice-based research must be used in tandem with traditional clinical trials. For example, through the Distributed Ambulatory Research in Therapeutics Network (DARTNet), the AAFP is seeking to improve the quality and safety of medical care by collecting and sharing clinical data and best practices. This program uses electronic health records, practice-based research networks and practical clinical trials to advance comparative effectiveness research.

For these reasons and based on their qualifications, we urge you to appoint a family physician onto the PCORI board. Included are resumes for Drs. Ganiats, Scherger, and Wall. We appreciate the opportunity to provide these names for the GAOs consideration and make ourselves available for any questions you might have or clarifications you might need. Please contact Debbie Weiner, Government Relations Representative and Grassroots Manager, at 202-232-9033 or dweiner@aafp.org.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey J. Cain, M.D., FAAFP
Board Chair

Enclosures