

Family physicians receive nearly **214 million office visits** each year (almost **74 million more** than the next largest medical specialty).

The family physician

America's family physicians treat patients with consideration for their family and community, and offer an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship to provide comprehensive care. Family physicians are trained to treat most ailments and provide health care for people of all ages—from pediatrics to geriatrics.

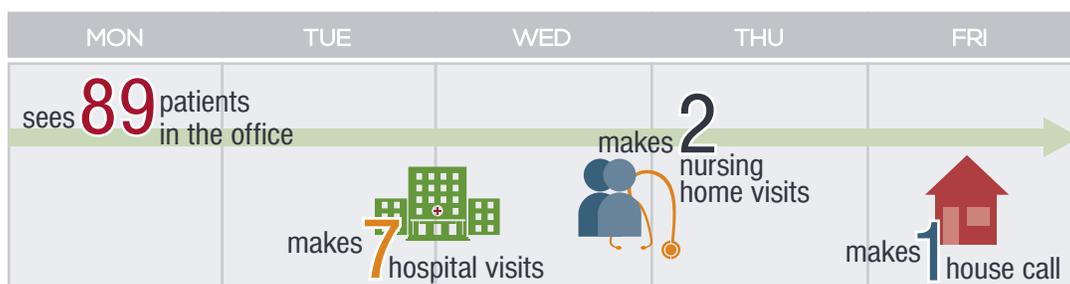
What family physicians do

- Take primary responsibility for a patient's ongoing care
- Manage a patient's care, which can include chronic conditions such as diabetes and depression
- Coordinate care from other physicians and other health care providers
- Diagnose and treat patients of all ages
- Diagnose and treat a wider range of problems than any other specialty
- Provide a broad range of care that can include the delivery of babies, minor surgeries, and counseling
- Perform preventive screenings
- Treat more rural and underserved patients than any other specialty

What other physician-specialties do

- Practice a narrow aspect of medicine, targeted to a particular organ or disease
- Only treat patients within a specific age range
- Only perform services as ordered from another physician
- Only provide services during acute episodes

In a typical week, *the average family physician:*



One in four physician office visits are made to **family physicians.**



Comprehensive primary care

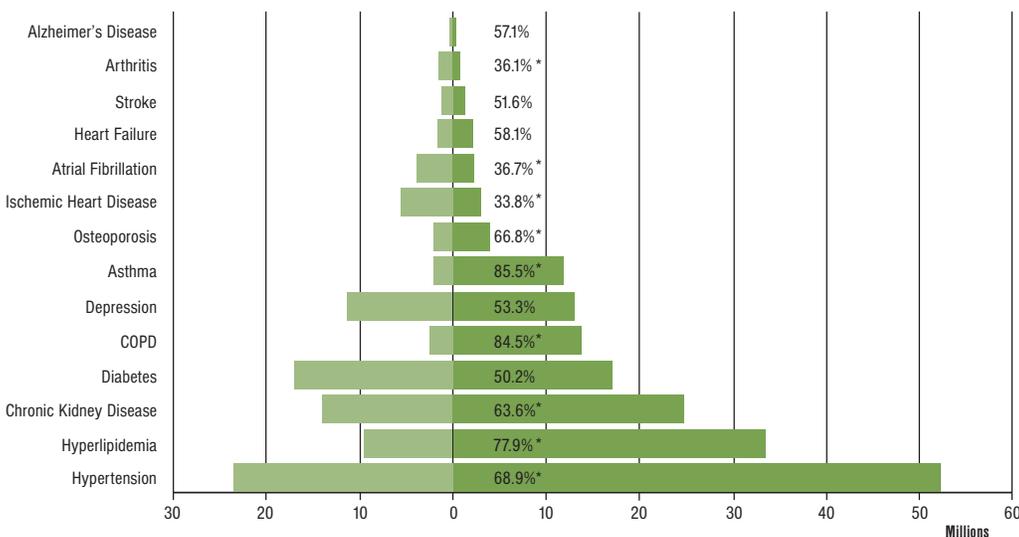
Unlike other physician specialties that are limited to a particular organ or disease, family medicine integrates care for patients to deliver a range of acute, chronic, and preventive medical care services within a patient-centered medical home.

In addition to diagnosis and treatment, family physicians provide preventive care which include routine checkups, health-risk assessments, immunization and screening tests, and counseling on maintaining a health lifestyle. Family physicians manage chronic illness, and often coordinate care provided by subspecialists. From heart disease, stroke, and hypertension, to diabetes, cancer, and asthma, family physicians provide ongoing, personal care for the nation's most serious health problems.

Family physicians have the flexibility to tailor clinical services to the distinct needs of their individual patients. In addition to office-based procedural training, family physicians receive training in hospital-based medicine, such as critical care and obstetrical procedures. Family physicians have the flexibility to incorporate more procedures into patient care, as their skills and interests evolve, and the demand for services develops in their community.

Today, family physicians provide the majority of care for America's underserved rural and urban populations. In fact, family physicians are more proportionately distributed to the U.S. population than any other physician specialty. Without family physicians, rural and underserved populations, in particular, would lack access to primary care.

Number and percentage of outpatient chronic conditions visits by physician type in the past year, based on the 2008 National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey. * $P < 0.05$ significant test done by SAS Procedure Surveyfreq Roa-Scott χ^2 test. COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.



Journal of the American Board of Medicine, January – February 2014 Vol. 27 No. 1

As the only medical society dedicated to representing the distinct needs and interests of family physicians, the American Academy of Family Physicians serves more than 115,900 family physician, resident, and medical student members nationwide.

To learn more, contact

AAFP Government Relations at (202) 232-9033.
1133 Connecticut Ave., Suite 1100, NW, Washington, DC 20036

www.aafp.org/advocacy