Choose Family Medicine

A strong primary care-based health system leads to:

**Better Health**
- The evidence shows that access to primary care helps people live longer, healthier lives.
- Studies suggest that as many as 127,617 deaths per year in the U.S. could be averted through an increase in the number of primary care physicians.
- In areas of the country where there are more primary care providers per person, death rates for cancer, heart disease, and stroke are lower and people are less likely to be hospitalized.

**Better Care**
- Urban and rural communities that have an adequate supply of primary care practitioners experience lower infant mortality, higher birth weights, and immunization rates at or above national standards despite social disparities.
- An increase of one primary care doctor per 10,000 people can decrease costly and unnecessary care:
  - Outpatient visits: 5.0%
  - Inpatient admissions: 5.5%
  - ER visits: 10.9%
  - Surgeries: 7.7%
- Evidence also shows that primary care, in contrast to specialty care, is associated with a more equitable distribution of health in populations, a finding that holds in both cross-national and within-national studies.

**Lower Cost**
- A primary care-based system may cost less because patients experience fewer hospitalizations, less duplication, and more appropriate technology.
- U.S. adults who have a primary care physician have 33% lower health care costs.
- Medicare spending is less for states with more primary care physicians and yet these states have more effective, high-quality care.
Family physicians are many things, among them the backbone of the U.S. health care system. The quarter of the health care team, and a patient’s most trusted advocate for their health.

In the increasingly fragmented world of health care where many medical specialties tend their practice to a particular organ, disease, age, or sex, family physicians are dedicated to treating the whole person across the full spectrum of ages. The heart of family medicine is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care.

Choose Purpose

Family physicians are expected to:

- Serve patients the care they need when they are most vulnerable.
- Care for patients regardless of age and health conditions, and work to sustain an enduring and trusting relationship with them.
- Be each patient’s first contact for health concerns.
- Help patients with preventing, understanding, and managing illness.
- Navigate the health system with patients, including coordinating with specialists and sharing connected with patients before, during, and after time spent in a hospital.
- Use data to prioritize and coordinate services most likely to benefit a patient’s health.
- Use technology to maintain and enhance access, continuity, and relationships.
- Understand the effects of the community-level factors and social determinants of health on their patients’ well-being, and identify community resources available to meet their health needs.
- Care for patients in the context of their family and the ways in which the health of each family member affects the others.

Choose Variety

Family physicians offer diverse services:

- 36% perform minor surgical procedures
- 45% treat patients in the ICU
- 40% deliver care in hospital
- 55% are sole care for newborns
- 77% have hospital privileges
- 15% provide routine OB care

Choose Innovation

Family physicians perform multiple types of procedures:

- Colonoscopy
- Colonoscopy
- Endoscopy
- Musculoskeletal injections
- Spine
- Skin procedures
- Suturing lacerations
- Ultrasound imaging
- Vasectomy

Choose Knowledge

Family physicians are trained to offer the best possible patient care:

- 3-year residency (with a few options for 4-year programs)
- Additional training options (fellowships and Certificates of Added Qualification) include (3 months to 3 years):
  - Adolescent medicine
  - Emergency medicine
  - Faculty development
  - Geriatric medicine
  - Hospice and palliative care
  - Hospitalist
  - Integrative medicine
  - International
  - Obstetrics
  - Sleep medicine
  - Sports medicine

Choose Versatility

Family physicians have many practice options:

- Solo or group practice
- Multiplicity of group practice
- Cares in public health, government, residency, or medical school faculty
- Research and academic health centers
- Hospice
- Community health center
- Global health and international medicine
- Frontier or wilderness medicine
- Rural, urban, and suburban practices
- Emergency care
- Nursing home

Today’s family physician can have a fulfilling career while maintaining a healthy work-life balance and a comfortable lifestyle that allows time to travel and raise a family. Family physicians:

- Practice 47 weeks per year
- Spend 34 hours per week in face-to-face patient contact

The geographic spread of family physicians across the United States more closely matches the geographic spread of the general population than any other specialty.

- While 80% of the U.S. population in urban areas, 77.5% of family physicians are in urban areas.
- While 30% of the U.S. population is rural areas, 22.5% of family physicians are in rural areas.

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