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FFM family medicine

## What is a family physician?

In the increasingly fragmented world of health care, one thing remains constant: Family physicians are dedicated to treating the whole person. Family medicine's cornerstone is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focusing on integrated care. Unlike other specialties that are limited to a particular organ, disease, age or sex, family medicine integrates care for patients of both genders across the full spectrum of ages within the context of community and advocates for the patient in an increasingly complex health care system.

## Family Medicine's Basket of Services

Providing patients with a personal medical home, family physicians deliver a range of acute, chronic and preventive medical care services. In addition to diagnosing and treating illness, they also provide preventive care, including routine checkups, health-risk assessments, immunization and screening tests, and personalized counseling on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Family physicians also manage chronic illness, often coordinating care provided by other subspecialists. From heart disease, stroke and hypertension, to diabetes, cancer and asthma, family physicians provide primary care for the nation's most serious health problems.

*Other services family physicians provide include:*

- Maternity care
- Hospital care
- Primary mental health care
- Supportive care, including end-of-life care

## By the Numbers

**1969** year the specialty of family medicine was created

**47 million** people in the United States who lack health insurance

**70,000** practicing family physicians in the United States

**1 in 4** number of all office visits that are made to family physicians

**216 million** office visits to general and family physicians in 2001 — **48 million** more than to any other specialty

**33%** U.S. counties that depend on family physicians to avoid designation as primary health professional shortage areas

**35%** visits to primary care physicians for chronic conditions

**33%** visits to primary care physicians for acute problems

**3** years of residency training family physicians complete

**281** – number of family medicine fellowships

**6** major medical areas in which family physicians receive training during residency: pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, internal medicine, psychiatry and neurology, surgery and community medicine

**1st** family medicine was the first most recruited specialty in 2006

**\$67 billion** how much the nation would save if every American used a primary care physician

**\$161,000** average signing salary for a family medicine physician after expenses


**25%** increase in income projected for family physician practices that use new technologies and new care models such as chronic disease management


## The Family Medicine Model


The family medicine model of care aims to reintegrate and personalize health care for patients, who are increasingly frustrated with the fragmented and complex health care system. The model provides patients with a personal medical home through which they can receive a basket of services, within the context of a continuing relationship with their physician. This new approach to practice differs dramatically from old practice models.


Traditional Model of Practice	Family Medicine Model of Practice
Systems often disrupt the patient-physician relationship	Systems support continuous healing relationships
Care is provided to both sexes and all ages; includes all stages of the individual and family life cycles in continuous, healing relationships	Care is provided to both sexes and all ages; includes all stages of the individual and family life cycles in continuous, healing relationships
Physician is center stage	Patient is center stage
Unnecessary barriers to access by patients	Open access by patients
Care is mostly reactive	Care is both responsive and prospective
Care is often fragmented	Care is integrated
Paper medical record	Electronic health record
Unpredictable package of services is offered	Commitment to providing directly and/or coordinating a defined basket of services
Individual patient oriented	Individual and community oriented
Communication with practice is synchronous (in person or by telephone)	Communication with the practice is both synchronous and asynchronous (e-mail, Web portal, voice mail)
Quality and safety of care are assumed	Processes are in place for ongoing measurement and improvement of quality and safety
Physician is the main source of care	Multidisciplinary team is the source of care
Individual physician-patient visits	Individual and group visits involving several patients and members of the health care team
Consumes knowledge	Generates new knowledge through practice-based research
Experience based	Evidence based
Haphazard chronic disease management	Purposeful, organized chronic disease management
Struggles financially, undercapitalized	Positive financial margin, adequately capitalized


## Thumbs up for Family Medicine !

**Electronic records**  Electronic health records soon will be the central nervous system of the family medicine practice, reducing medical errors and improving quality of care.

**Chronic disease management**  Family physicians are on the frontlines of managing the chronic diseases that beset Americans. They work with patients and other health care providers to develop organized and personalized care plans for patients.

**Reducing barriers to access**  Open access scheduling, expanded office hours, and additional options for communication between patients and practice staff ensure patients get care when they need it.

**Practice-based research**  A more accurate reflection of where people live and receive treatment, the community family practice is the new research laboratory, generating relevant and broad-based primary care knowledge that will help guide future practice and policy.

**Team approach**  Health care is a cooperative effort of a multidisciplinary team that may include physicians assistance, nurse practitioners, nutritionists, health educators, behavioral scientists and other partners.

