

# Primary Care for the 21st Century

Ensuring a Quality, Physician-led Team for Every Patient

The U.S. is moving to a new primary care model built around patients and delivered by teams, known as the **Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH)**.



## What is it?

- Each person has an ongoing relationship with a **personal physician** who provides continuous, comprehensive care
- **Physician leads a team** of professionals to care for patients



- Personal physician **coordinates with other health care providers within the PCMH** and across the complex health care system



- **Quality and safety** are hallmarks, and patients and their families actively participate in decision making



- **Enhanced access to care** through open and same-day scheduling, expanded clinical hours, and new options for communication

## Can a nurse lead the team?

Nurses are vital members of the team, but **nurse ≠ doctor**

### Years of Education and Training<sup>1</sup>



Doctors bring broader and deeper expertise to the diagnosis and treatment of all health problems. Doctors are trained to provide complex diagnoses and develop comprehensive plans to treat them.

*3 out of 4*

patients prefer to be treated by a physician even if it takes longer to get an appointment and even if it costs more.<sup>2</sup>

## Why do we need it?



- **Fewer** emergency room visits
- **Fewer** hospital admissions and readmissions
- **Shorter** hospital stays<sup>3</sup>

## How do we make the PCMH a reality for everyone?

- 1 We have to fix the primary care workforce shortage.**

**45,000** too few primary care **physicians** by 2020<sup>4</sup>

AND

**260,000** too few registered **nurses** by 2025<sup>5</sup>

- 2 We need more doctors, and we need more nurses, and we need them working together in teams.**



Studies show the ideal practice ratio of nurse practitioners to physicians is approximately **4 to 1**.<sup>6</sup> At this ratio, everyone can have a physician-led team, and the primary care shortage can be eliminated.

- 3 How can we train more primary care doctors?**



- Increase federal funding for primary care physician education.



- Help medical students pay back or defray medical school debt.



- Improve primary care physician payment so students will consider primary care careers.

<sup>1</sup> Martin, Greg. "Education and Training: Family Physicians and Nurse Practitioners." Web. 12 June 2012.

<sup>2</sup> American Medical Association. "Patient support for physician-led health care teams." September 2012.

<sup>3</sup> "Proof in Practice: A Compilation of Patient Centered Medical Home Pilot and Demonstration Projects." Web. 12 June 2012.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.aamc.org/download/150584/data/physician\\_shortages\\_factsheet.pdf](https://www.aamc.org/download/150584/data/physician_shortages_factsheet.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Buerhas, Peter I., David I. Auerbach, and Douglas O. Staiger.

*The Recent Surge in Nurse Employment: Causes and Implications.* Web. 12 June 2012.

<sup>6</sup> *Investing in Health.* New York: Published for the World Bank, Oxford UP, 1993. Print.

Visit [aafp.org/pcmh-team](http://aafp.org/pcmh-team) to learn more.