



Communities of practice in the Patient's Medical Home: Building intraprofessional collaborations

Best Advice Guide: Quick Reference




Family physicians have a crucial role in their communities, providing continuing comprehensive care, and the way they provide the care is evolving. In order to maintain the quality and accessibility of full scope of services, family medicine offers a wide variety of practice types. **Family physicians with special interests (FPSIs)** include one or more areas of special interest as integrated parts of the broad scope of services they offer. **Family physicians with focused practices** are those with a commitment to one or more clinical areas as major components of their practice.

Communities of practice in family medicine (CPFM) have been established in clinical domains such as addiction medicine, cancer care, chronic pain, emergency medicine, mental health, and sport and exercise medicine. Go to [Section of Communities of Practice in Family Medicine](#) for a comprehensive list of CPFM programs.









Consider the following steps for your practice...

In the Patient's Medical Home (PMH) model, team-based practices promote continuity and comprehensiveness of care, allowing physicians to best serve patients and accompany them on their life journey. The work of FPSIs and family physicians with focused practices as part of such teams can empower other family physicians to better meet the needs of communities. This can happen by:

-  **Enhancing** existing physicians' skill sets in areas needed in the community
-  **Including** FPSIs as part of a PMH team
-  **Establishing** formal consultative agreements with groups of physicians focusing in an area

How to leverage communities of practice to meet your community needs

-  **Identify community needs:** Family physicians are encouraged to identify gaps in health care provision in their local practice environment, and determine whether they or other family physicians with added skills may be able to meet those needs.
-  **Establish lines of communications:** This involves transmitting relevant information about individuals and programs in a timely, legible, relevant, and understandable manner.
-  **Co-locate services in family practice settings:** Though this is not a requirement, co-location can foster collaborative environments within a family practice setting to address the health care needs of people using those services.
-  **Participate in virtual communities:** Virtual communities of practice allow family physicians to work together to provide resources and consultations as needed; technological advances and EMRs assist such collaborations.
-  **Consult with other family physicians:** This can take place several ways, including providing advice, guidance, and follow-up for specific cases where relevant. Practices collaborating with FPSIs and family physicians with focused practices can refer patients to additional services when needed and have direct lines of communication, allowing them to discuss care plans, which leads to an enhanced continuity of care across providers. By providing an expanded level of health care services in the PMH, patients can receive care in a familiar environment from care providers with whom they have established a relationship, including a family physician as a most responsible provider.
-  **Promote teaching and research in the PMH:** Providing formal and informal learning to colleagues as part of their work can raise the overall knowledge base of the PMH team.

For more information about how to establish communities of practice in the [Patient's Medical Home](#), and for resources available to you, please refer to Best Advice guide: [Communities of Practice in the Patient's Medical Home](#).