

Comprehensive Primary Care Initiative an “Important Breakthrough” in Solving Health Care Challenges

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Statement Attributable to:
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“The American Academy of Family Physicians applauds the Comprehensive Primary Care Initiative announced today by the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation. This program is an important breakthrough in reforming our health care policy — focusing our system on patients’ needs, ensuring their access to primary care and helping control the cost of health services.

“The program begins by encouraging private sector insurers to align their payment systems with the Comprehensive Primary Care Initiative. The initiative will combine fee-for-service with a per-patient, per-month coordination fee that will range from \$8 to \$40, with an average of \$20. CMS then will recruit 75 primary care practices in as many as five to seven regional markets to participate. Those primary care physicians will earn the monthly per-patient fee for both Medicare and Medicaid patients as well as for their patients who are enrolled in participating private sector plans. The cost savings resulting from this reform will be shared with the physicians as an incentive to keep health care affordable.

“Why is this important?

“A patient-centered medical home coordinates all the health services a patient may need – be it preventive care, diagnosis and treatment of an acute illness, or management of a complex, chronic condition. But this way of providing care requires large investments in electronic health records, redesigned medical offices and committed time for communication with subspecialists, pharmacists, hospitals, home care agencies and therapists. These services are vital to ensuring that patients get the right care from the right health professional at the right time. But they have never been acknowledged in the way we pay for medical services. The blended payment approach in this initiative will correct this misaligned system.

“Family physicians have made important strides toward converting their practices to patient-centered medical homes. A survey of AAFP members shows that seven in 10 use e-prescribing technology and nearly half use lab result tracking technology. Seventy-three percent offer same-day appointments; nearly half provided extended office hours and nearly one-third provide weekend appointments. With this initiative, more patients will have access to these important services.

“We’re confident this initiative will further demonstrate that patient outcomes improve and costs are

– more –

saved when the health care system values primary care by paying for *all* the services family physicians provide to their patients. And we're pleased that the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services has the authority to expand this program once the results of this initiative are in."

Editor's Note: To arrange an interview with Dr. Stream, contact Leslie Champlin, 800-274-2237, Ext. 5224, or lchampli@aafp.org.

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About the American Academy of Family Physicians

Founded in 1947, the AAFP represents 100,300 physicians and medical students nationwide. It is the only medical society devoted solely to primary care.

Approximately one in four of all office visits are made to family physicians. That is 228 million office visits each year -- nearly 84 million more than the next largest medical specialty. Today, family physicians provide more care for America's underserved and rural populations than any other medical specialty. Family medicine's cornerstone is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care.

To learn more about the specialty of family medicine, the AAFP's positions on issues and clinical care, and for downloadable multi-media highlighting family medicine, visit www.aafp.org/media. For information about health care, health conditions and wellness, please visit the AAFP's award-winning consumer Web site, www.FamilyDoctor.org.