

Models of physician-led team-based care

The American Medical Association strongly supports physician-led team-based care as an effective model of health care delivery. Physician-led health care teams have the potential to address access problems due to an imbalance between the supply of health care professionals and the demand for health care. A strategic focus of the AMA is to enhance professional satisfaction and practice sustainability by shaping delivery and payment models. The AMA continues to evaluate team-based care models as part of this focus. In addition, the AMA encourages medical schools to develop and include innovative models of interprofessional training in their curriculum.

Unique team-based models

The AMA encourages physician choice of practice rather than endorsing specific team-based models. Teams in different situations work differently, so no specific team-based model is appropriate for all physician practices or clinical situations. Each physician practice should design its team-based model according to its needs, the population served and relevant state laws.

Physician practices of all sizes and specialties that want to practice in a physician-led team-based manner should implement the necessary elements, as identified by the practice. Given the greater efficiencies and quality of care that team-based health care has the potential to provide, independently practicing physicians and physicians in small practices are encouraged to seek opportunities to connect with similar sized practices to form team-based health care networks. The use of more sophisticated information technology resources, such as health information exchanges, will likely facilitate communication among and between such networks and the teams of providers within them.

Potential elements of team-based models

Important elements that contribute to the success of a team-based model include respect for physician expertise and authority, adherence to the AMA's *Code of Medical Ethics*, prioritization of patient safety, and

knowledge of state laws on collaboration between health care professionals. In addition, four essential components of developing a team-based model are described below.

Patient-centered care

Patient-centered care places the patient in the central role of his or her health care. This focus takes into consideration the patient's preferences, medical history, support system, and relationship with health care providers throughout his or her health care delivery experience. Patient-centered care should include:

- Establishing a patient-physician relationship at the beginning of care
- Explaining each team member's role to the patient
- Prioritizing patient and family-centered care
- Adhering to best-practice protocols
- Emphasizing a focus on improving health outcomes
- Providing access to the team 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Developing and adhering to safety protocols

Teamwork

Teamwork in a health care setting includes physicians and non-physician practitioners working together, and sharing decisions and information for the benefit of the patient. Physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and other professionals should work together, drawing on the specific strengths of each team member. Working in a team should include:

- Physicians leading the team
- Physician leaders making decisions about the composition of the team
- Practitioners committed to working in a team-based care model
- A variety of practitioners reflecting the needs of the practice
- Practitioners trained according to their unique function in the team
- Team members communicating about patient care
- Team members completing tasks autonomously

Clinical roles and responsibilities

The leader of a physician-led health care team should be empowered to perform the full range of medical interventions that she or he is trained to perform. Team members should be enabled to perform the medical interventions they are capable of performing according to their education, training, licensure and at the discretion of the physician team leader in order to most effectively provide quality patient care. Clinical roles and responsibilities should include:

- Physician leaders focusing on patient care, the diagnosis of illnesses and complex cases
- Non-physician practitioners focusing on routine, preventive and follow-up care
- Team members coordinating care and managing caseloads
- Team members managing the health of populations
- Team members developing a registry for most medical conditions

Practice management

Practice management tools are essential to the successful functioning of a medical practice and are integral to the quality and efficiency of the health care that is provided. Practice management should include:

- Using electronic medical records to the fullest capacity
- Using continuous quality improvement processes
- Using data analytic tools on cost and utilization
- Streamlining prior authorization and precertification processes through electronic transactions

The future of team-based care models

The professional training for team-based care is increasingly beginning in medical school. The AMA is focusing its attention, resources, and expertise on aligning medical education and training with the changing needs of our health care system. In 2013 the AMA launched its “Accelerating Change in Medical Education” initiative to bring innovative changes to medical education. Envisioning the medical school of the future, the AMA is working across the medical education continuum to meet the needs of our nation’s medical students, physicians, and patients by creating new models for learning and new methods and opportunities for, among other things, incorporating physician-led team-based care into innovative educational models.

The participating consortium of schools in the AMA initiative are developing ways to give medical students early exposure to inter-professional education and to working as physician leaders with other health care professionals. The ultimate goal of this initiative is that these undergraduate medical education improvements will be tested, refined and adopted as established options. Visit changemed.org for more information.

To learn more, view the AMA Council on Medical Service Report “[Development of Models/Guidelines for Medical Health Care Teams](#).” Visit ama-assn.org/go/physicianledteams to view additional documents in the AMA’s team-based care series.