



*A collaboration between the
Department of Family and Community Medicine,
University of California, San Francisco, and
The Permanente Medical Group*

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Challenge

The fundamental goal of health care is to improve the health of the public. Abundant evidence indicates that health care systems built on a solid foundation of primary care are best able to achieve this goal. Systems that invest in a strong primary care infrastructure deliver more effective, efficient, and equitable care than systems that fail to invest adequately in primary care.

Primary care is endangered in the United States, and confronts major challenges worldwide. Manifestations of this predicament include clinical performance in primary care that falls well short of achieving the desired outcomes, primary care clinicians afflicted with the “hamster syndrome” of working harder and harder without gaining ground, and declining numbers of US medical school graduates electing careers in primary care. In the US, primary care faces both external and internal threats. The chief external threats consist of the failure to invest an adequate share of the nation’s health care resources in primary care and to assure all people access to primary care. This failure results in insufficient support and financial incentives for operating and modernizing primary care practices, training the future primary care workforce, and attracting physicians and other clinicians into careers in primary care.

The principal internal threat consists of the failure of primary care clinicians and practice organizations to more nimbly and imaginatively innovate and implement new practice models in response to changing population health needs and the growing clinical demands of primary care practice. A complacency with conventional practice models and practice roles in primary care, coupled with rigid accreditation regulations governing the training of primary care physicians, have impeded the ability of primary care practices to adapt to the changing health care landscape and fulfill the key functions of primary care.

Our Mission

The Center for Excellence in Primary Care was created in 2005 to respond to these challenges. The mission of the Center is to catalyze the transformation of primary care at the regional, national, and international level.

Principles

The following principles underpin the work of the Center:

- All patients have the right to a primary care home which is affordable and promptly accessible when assistance is needed, and delivers high quality care based on medical evidence, in a compassionate and culturally competent manner.
- A work environment that produces burn out and professional dissatisfaction among primary care clinicians is inimical to high quality health care for patients.
- A greater share of health care resources in the US must be invested in primary care, including a reduction in the payment gap between primary care and specialty services.
- 20th Century models of primary care will not meet the needs of a 21st Century health system. Bold innovation and redesign of primary care practice models are imperative.
- Advocates for primary care must be willing to engage in reflection and self-criticism, challenge conventional ways of doing things in primary care, and take risks in experimenting with new approaches to delivering primary care and educating primary care clinicians. Best practices in

innovation must be disseminated and shared to promote a learning community in primary care redesign.

- Primary care is a “team sport.” Physicians working alone cannot successfully deliver the primary care basket of services. In addition to the need for teamwork among the diverse groups of health care workers involved in primary care, patients and consumers must be recognized and fully engaged as key members of the primary care team. Sectarian strife among the different specialties and professions that comprise the primary care clinician workforce is counterproductive.
- Experiments in primary care redesign must be accompanied by ongoing evaluation to provide an evidence base for understanding the effects of these changes on patients, clinicians, and others.

Specific Aims

Based on these principles, and to advance the Center’s mission, the Center for Excellence in Primary Care has the following specific aims:

1. *To disseminate primary care innovation.* The Center will use a multi-pronged strategy to disseminate examples of primary care innovations and practice redesign to highlight “best practices” and showcase illustrative models for an audience seeking to innovate in their own practices. Dissemination vehicles will include a periodic “Primary Care E-Letter,” web site postings, journal articles, conference convening, and related strategies.
2. *To inform and advocate for policy changes to produce greater investment in primary care.* The Center will perform novel policy research and compile existing research to contribute to the evidence base to support investment in the primary care infrastructure. The Center will develop a communications strategy to ensure that this evidence is communicated in a way that is intelligible and compelling not only to health professionals, but to policymakers, health care purchasers, and the public.
3. *To transform primary care at the regional level and create a model for nationwide reform.* The Center will reach out to integrated delivery systems, medical groups, community health centers, county health departments, health care purchasers, health plans, government agencies, consumers, and other entities and engage them in a campaign to boldly reform the delivery of primary care across health systems in the San Francisco Bay Area. The campaign will encourage delivery systems to implement ambitious new models of primary care, and purchasers and payers to reform payment and regulatory policies in support of these innovations.
4. *To evaluate primary care innovations.* The Center will conduct research to evaluate innovative models of primary care, changes in the financing and organization of primary care, interventions to strengthen the clinician-patient partnership, and other crucial issues, in order to strengthen the evidence base guiding the transformation of primary care. The Center will strive to conduct research that is both rigorous and relevant, emphasizing the translation of research evidence into practice.