

# Illinois State Medical Society



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:**           Stephan Konya, Chief of Staff, Illinois Department of Public Health  
                  Dave Gallagher, Illinois Workforce Investment Board Staff

**FROM:**       Illinois State Medical Society  
                  Illinois Academy of Family Physicians

**RE:**           Physician Supported Workforce Issues and the Importance of Establishing  
                  and Maintaining Physician-Led, Patient Centered Medical Homes

**DATE:**       February 10, 2014

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As the State of Illinois moves forward in its effort to innovate and reorganize Illinois's healthcare delivery systems, physicians at the Illinois State Medical Society and the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians know that patients prefer and are best served in a patient centered medical home where they are cared for by a physician led team of professionals, who by working together, can address all of their healthcare needs.

Within these medical homes, “each patient has an ongoing relationship with a personal physician trained to provide first contact, complex diagnosis, and continuous, comprehensive care. The physician leads a team of professionals at the practice level who are collectively responsible for the ongoing care of patients — many of whom are living with one or more chronic conditions. This reorganization puts primary care at the center of the patient's team and better enables doctors, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and other health care professionals to work side by side in caring for patients”.<sup>i</sup>

Patient Centered Medical Homes have been found to reduce the cost of care through reduction of inpatient visits, emergency department use, hospital readmissions, and other factors all while improving patient outcomes and quality of care.<sup>ii</sup>

The Patient Centered Medical Home's success is dependent on *physician*-led teams. Physicians, with over 11 years of education and training, are able to provide complex differential diagnosis and develop treatment plans for patients who may have multiple chronic conditions. Physicians serve as leaders of care teams, ensuring care is effective, accessible and efficient.<sup>iii</sup> Nurses, while an essential component of the medical home, are not equivalent to physicians. Nurse practitioners receive 5.5 to 7 years of education and are trained to follow through on a patient's

treatment after diagnosis.<sup>iv</sup> A physician led team ensures the highest quality health care and appropriate oversight, with each member of the care team contributing within their expertise.

General statements have been made, particularly as they relate to health care reform, that health care professionals should be practicing at the maximum limit their education and training allows. We agree with that statement and are not aware of any professions not currently meeting that limit.

Any effort to expand a professional's scope of practice beyond that and allow them to practice independently of physicians puts the patient at risk and fractures patient care. While access to health care is always a concern, allowing less qualified health professionals to practice as physicians without requiring physician input contradicts the concept and intent of the patient centered medical home, and also threatens the safety of patients and quality of healthcare in Illinois.

ISMS and IAFP have consistently worked with advocates representing nurses and physician assistants to ensure these professionals are practicing to their fullest extent. Please contact ISMS and IAFP respectively with any questions or for further information on our position.

In addition, ISMS is providing the attached summary of substantial changes to their licensure acts designed to provide them with appropriate flexibility while protecting patient safety.

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<sup>i</sup> Primary Care for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Ensuring a Quality, Physician-led Team for Every Patient, American Academy of Family Physicians, 2014.

<sup>ii</sup> Benefits of Implementing the Primary Care Medical Home A Review of Cost and Quality Results 2012, Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative.

<sup>iii</sup> Primary Care for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Ensuring a Quality Physician-led Team for Every Patient, American Academy of Family Physicians, 2012.

<sup>iv</sup> Primary Care for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Ensuring a Quality Physician-led Team for Every Patient, American Academy of Family Physicians, 2012.