

How Do Nurse Practitioner-led Patient-Centered Medical Homes Differ from Other Patient-Centered Medical Homes?

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OBJECTIVE

The patient-centered medical home (PCMH) is an enhanced model of primary care and has grown substantially over time. Although initially established as a physician-centric model, the model has evolved to emphasize team-based care and in some cases, the development of non-physician-led PCMHs. Currently there are almost 300 nurse-led PCMH practices recognized by the national accreditation body, the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). However, little is known about whether and to what extent nurse-led PCMHs differ from physician-led PMCHs in terms of patient populations they serve, staff composition as well as roles and responsibilities of each team member, and the services they provide.

METHODS

We invited 276 NP-led PCMHs and a random sample of 665 physician-, hospital-, or community health center (CHC)-led PCMHs to participate in an online survey. The survey included questions regarding patient populations they serve, staff composition as well as services provided by each staff member, and the extent and structure of the innovation they adopted.

RESULTS

Of the 941 potential participating practices, 21 completed the survey. The respondents included 1 NP-led, 10 physician-led, 4 hospital-led, and 6 CHC-led PCMHs. The number of respondents is not enough to generate any meaningful analysis. A preliminary descriptive report found that compared to other PCMHs, the NP-led PCMH had fewer staff and also had fewer patients. However, similar patterns emerged when we compared the services and transformation efforts provided by the NP-led PCMH and those provided by other PCMHs.

CONCLUSIONS

With the current and growing shortage of primary care workforce, NPs are key to the design of several emerging models of primary care including PCMHs and the pace is very likely to accelerate. NP-led PCMHs are believed to increase access to primary care by enhancing the ability of NPs to fill gaps in primary care for vulnerable populations in rural and medically underserved areas. This project examined the patient and practice profiles in NP-led PCMHs, which will be an important guide as policy makers track the adoption of PCMHs.

Key Words: patient-centered medical home, nurse practitioner, staffing