Transforming primary care

Legacy Health's patient-centered medical homes

"The medical home model shifts us from the current disjointed care to a more coordinated approach to the health of the whole person, with the primary care physician looking out for the big picture."

— Melinda J. Muller, M.D., clinical vice president of primary care, Legacy Health

What is a medical home?

A medical home is a primary care practice focused on the health of the whole person in all stages of life, for both acute and chronic care as well as preventive care. Unlike the traditional approach, where various specialists may treat a patient in isolation, in the medical home model a single personal physician leads a team that collectively takes responsibility for the patient's ongoing care.

The medical home coordinates across the health care spectrum (subspecialty care, hospitals, home health agencies, nursing homes, etc.) and the patient's community (family, public and private services). The hallmarks of a medical home are quality, safety and comprehensive, proactive care.

How do patients benefit?

For patients and their families, a medical home offers individually tailored services in a compassionate and robust partnership with physicians and other providers. While the young and healthy might receive simple reminders about preventive care, those with chronic diseases, such as diabetes or hypertension, would receive care focused on that disease. People with complex medical issues might also be supported with extra assistance from a health coach, nurse case manager or outside agency. This approach boosts both patient satisfaction and confidence.

Legacy's move to medical homes

The primary care clinics of Legacy Medical Group embarked on medical home transformation in 2007, well before federal health care reform legislation passed. A carefully planned rollout began with a few clinics and a focus on certain issues including depression management, nonmalignant pain management and intensive case management of diabetes. By the end of 2011, all of Legacy's primary care clinics will have embarked on the medical home transformation.

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Measurable results

As our first medical home clinics enter their fourth year and we expand to our remaining clinics, the improvements we have worked so hard to reach are becoming more tangible. Legacy's medical home clinics show a steady increase in the percentage of patients who are current on their lab tests, health maintenance tests and immunizations. Patients who are a part of a Legacy medical home are also requiring fewer emergency room visits and hospital stays.

The future of medical homes

The medical home model is not a quick fix and there are challenges. It can take four to five years to see major improvements in a patient population, but Legacy is seeing significant benefits in patient health.

The right thing to do

Legacy began the transformation to medical homes not to increase revenue, or because we were required to do so, but because we strongly believe that it is the right thing to do for our patients and our communities.

Legacy Health is a major health care provider with facilities in Oregon and Southwest Washington. A nonprofit, community-owned system, Legacy employs over 9,500 people, making it one of the region's largest private-sector employers. Legacy admits more than 56,000 people a year to its six hospitals and treats more than a half-million people in outpatient visits for primary and specialty care.

For more information, visit **www.legacyhealth.org**

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