

The 16th Annual Paul Brucker Lecture: Patient-Centered Primary Care

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The Paul Brucker MD Lecture in Health Care, established in 1990, was endowed by current and former Jefferson faculty, affiliate faculty, preceptors, family medicine resident graduates, and fellowship graduates in order to honor his many important contributions to Thomas Jefferson University and to American medicine. The Lecture was created at the time Dr. Brucker moved from his role as Alumni Professor and Founding Chairman of Family Medicine to President of Thomas Jefferson University. In so doing, he became the first family physician in the country to lead an academic medical center. Each year, the Brucker Lecture addresses current issues related to health care.

This year's speaker was Paul Grundy, MD, MPH, who spent much of his early career working overseas for the US State Department, advising US Ambassadors on healthcare programs for diplomatic posts, and working extensively in the international AIDS pandemic. Currently, he serves as Director of Healthcare, Technology and Strategic Initiatives at IBM's Global Wellbeing Services and Health Benefits. Dr. Grundy also serves as Chairman of the Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative (PCPCC), a coalition he led IBM in creating in 2006. The PCPCC is dedicated to advancing a new primary care model called the Patient-Centered Medical Home¹ in an effort to fundamentally reform healthcare delivery, which is essential to maintaining US international competitiveness.

Dr. Grundy's talk, "Patient-Centered Primary Care: Why Large Employers are Rediscovering the Value of Family Medicine and Primary Care," focused on the employer perspective regarding health care. He discussed how employers, a major payer, are increasingly dissatisfied with the cost and quality of health care they purchase for their employees. US employers pay substantially more for employee health benefits than their international competitors, making it increasingly difficult for them to compete globally. And, despite paying higher costs, they are currently unable to purchase quality comprehensive health care. Dr. Grundy discussed a major failure of the current US health care system — the lack of a primary care system that is structured and reimbursed in a way that adds value to health care. He emphasized the current consensus that it is critical to transform our system to make it more patient-centered.

He presented well-accepted US and international data showing that good primary care results in decreased mortality, morbidity, and cost, as well as increased patient satisfaction and higher quality.

The current system focuses on and financially rewards episodic care provided primarily by subspecialists who are not involved in the management of a patient's overall health. This situation often results in significant waste and decreased quality. Dr. Grundy discussed the increasingly popular concept of the patient-centered medical home¹ and the need to adequately reimburse this model of care. The medical home model is currently being supported by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Congress, Pennsylvania's new program (for which Jefferson's Family Medicine practice is a major participant), and by the National Center for Quality Assurance (NCQA), which has recently developed accreditation criteria for the medical home.

Dr. Grundy noted that large employers are using their leverage to push for blended payment to reimburse care provided by primary care physicians. They are adding a significant "care management fee" for providing comprehensive, coordinated care, in addition to the current fee-for-service reimbursement and a pay-for-performance incentive payment. Appropriate reimbursement for primary care would serve as an incentive to provide comprehensive care, and may serve to attract increased numbers of physicians to enter primary care practice. The entire lecture can be viewed at: <http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/videos/jdc/bruckerRef.mov>.

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References

1. American College of Physicians. The Advanced Medical Home: A patient-centered, physician-guided model of health care. Policy monograph. January 16, 2006. http://www.hhs.gov/healthit/ahic/materials/meeting03/cc/ACP_Initiative.pdf. Accessed August 12, 2008.