

Health Policy Newsletter

Volume 16 Number 4

December, 2003

Article 6

Preparing Primary Care Faculty for the Future

Janice E. Nevin, MD, MPH*
Heather Bittner, MD*

* Christiana Care Health System

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Suggested Citation:

Nevin JE, Bittner H. Preparing primary care faculty for the future. *Health Policy Newsletter* 2003; 16(4): Article 6. Retrieved [date] from <http://jdc.jefferson.edu/hpn/vol16/iss4/6>.

Preparing Primary Care Faculty for the Future

Nationally, changes in health care delivery and the burden of chronic disease, largely from preventable causes, continue to strain existing health care resources. In Delaware, a growing underserved minority population, a large number of uninsured, and disproportionately high death rates from cancer are serious concerns. The evolving need to provide and measure quality and improve health outcomes underscores a need to redefine the obligations of the primary care physician. The physician of the future must be well-versed in a number of emerging areas including genetics, geriatrics, end-of-life care, management of chronic disease, preventive care and performance improvement in order to achieve optimal health outcomes. The need to improve health outcomes in target populations highlights the need for congruency in medical education.

Health care disparity and quality outcomes evaluations reveal deficiencies in medical education. Skills in population-based medicine, community health principles, evaluation of cost and appropriate use of technology are necessary for the primary care physician; however, these are not formally or explicitly taught in medical school or residency. In response, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) has begun to reshape medical education to better reflect these new directions by including in the six general competencies the need to address practice-based learning and systems-based care. (See "ACGME Competencies: The Curricular Challenge," *Health Policy Newsletter* editorial, December 2002.)

Primary care faculty must be available in sufficient numbers and be appropriately trained to prepare the upcoming primary care workforce to provide health care that will address the needs of diverse populations. Christiana Care Health System is addressing future training needs with the implementation of a new faculty development initiative called "Preparing Primary Care Faculty for the Future." The project is being funded by the Health Resources and Services Agency through the Title VII Primary Care Training Grant Program. The goal of this project is to increase the pool of residency and medical school faculty with the skills necessary to prepare trainees for practice in the 21st century particularly as it relates to caring for underserved and vulnerable populations. The project reflects training needs at the federal, state and local levels and seeks to have an impact on important health outcomes. It is a collaborative venture between the Department of Family and Community Medicine and the Department of Medicine at Christiana Care Health Services.

Two specific initiatives will be developed and implemented in order to achieve the goal of the project. First, a new primary care fellowship in faculty development will be created and implemented. The curriculum for the new fellowship will include content areas such as preventive care, genetics, cultural competency, end-of-life care, geriatrics and the management of chronic disease. The context of learning will focus on vulnerable populations, specifically those patients on medical assistance or uninsured, the elderly, those living with HIV/AIDS and underrepresented minorities.

Fellows will attend weekly seminars examining important content areas, participate in performance activities of the system including the Medical Assistance HMO, complete block rotations in the clinical emphasis areas, precept/teach and provide direct patient care in underserved sites and complete a series of projects including a

curriculum project, a performance improvement project and a writing project. The first group of fellows will begin in July 2004. Eligibility for the fellowship includes completion of a residency in family medicine or internal medicine, demonstration of a commitment to teaching and leadership and a desire to care for underserved populations.

The second major initiative will be the development of the Community Clinical Faculty Program for community-based preceptors. Community physicians who are currently teaching or are interested in teaching will complete a series of six workshops over the course of two years. These workshops will include sessions on teaching methods, genetics, preventive care, end-of-life care and evidence-based medicine. Video technology will be used to allow participation of physicians in southern Delaware who would not ordinarily have access to an educational program offered on campus at Christiana Care. Participants will receive continuing medical education credit and a certificate of completion acknowledging their role as a Community Clinical Faculty Program attendee.

Various members of the Departments of Family Medicine and Medicine as well as other members of the Christiana Care leadership will serve as faculty for both initiatives. Janice Nevin, MD, MPH, Chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine, and Virginia Collier, MD, Vice Chair and Residency Program Director, Department of Medicine, are the Project Director and Co-Director. Heather Bittner, MD, a recent graduate of the Jefferson Primary Care Research Fellowship, is the Project Coordinator and can be contacted at hbittner@christianacare.org for further information.

About the Authors

Janice E. Nevin, MD, MPH, is an Associate Professor of Family Medicine at Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University, and Chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine at Christiana Care Health Services. Heather Bittner, MD, is Project Coordinator for the Department of Family and Community Medicine at Christiana Care Health Services.