

Joint Statement on Nurse Practitioners in Patient-Centered Medical Home Demonstration Projects

In 1967, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) coined the term “medical home.” Today’s pediatricians strive to provide medical homes for all their patients. The “medical home” concept is a system of health care centered on the child and the family in which the child receives comprehensive health care and other services to assure the best-possible outcome.

In 2006, refining the concept of the medical home, IBM developed the Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative (PCPCC) to address the physician shortage problems in family practice and internal medicine. The PCPCC now includes more than 400 major employers, all major health insurance plans, primary care physician organizations, allied health professional organizations, and many patient advocacy groups. The four primary care groups within the PCPCC, AAP, American Academy of Family Physicians, American College of Physicians, and American Osteopathic Association developed the Joint Principles of the Patient-Centered Medical Home in 2007. The American Medical Association adopted the Joint Principles in 2008.

Pilot projects are ongoing through Medicare and private payers to evaluate medical homes, including quality improvement and appropriate use of resources. There is widespread agreement that primary care physicians should be paid more for medical home activities so that patients will have access to high-quality, cost-effective primary care.

The medical home has become a visible and viable part of health care reform discussions on Capitol Hill. Nurse practitioners have lobbied Congress to be included in the medical home movement, including demonstration (or pilot) projects financed by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), because nurse practitioners have independent practice status in some states. The Joint Principles use the terms “personal physician” and “physician-directed” in describing the patient-centered medical home. They make no mention of nurse practitioners. Hence, Congress asked the primary care group of pediatrics, family medicine, internal and osteopathic medicine to respond to the possible need to include nurse practitioners in medical home activities.

To respond to nurse practitioner issues raised by members of Congress and the PCPCC, and to further integrate the medical home concept into health care reform, the primary care group developed the Joint Statement on Nurse Practitioners in Patient-Centered Medical Home Demonstration Projects. The statement concedes that nurse practitioners can *legally* be medical home directors in some states, and therefore be involved in patient-centered medical home pilot studies in those states. In its newest scope-of-practice statement, the AAP clearly states its opposition to the independent practice of nurse practitioners directing a medical home.

The Joint Statement also stresses that most patients should be in a medical home directed by a physician. As highly trained and experienced child health professionals,

pediatricians are the ideal directors of pediatric medical homes. The downside of opposing nurse practitioners will be fragmentation of legally qualified health professional organizations and confusion in Congress. At this juncture, there is far more to be gained for primary care by a unified approach in which all legally qualified parties promote the same medical home agenda.

The take-home message for pediatricians in their communities is that now is the time to develop the best medical homes possible so that pediatricians qualify for any enhanced payment opportunities that become available as a result of the medical home and PC-PCC movement. AAP Chapters must work with state medical societies and other primary care physician organizations to block any scope-of-practice legislation that dilutes the quality of the medical home. The AAP leadership is revisiting its scope-of-practice “speaking points” for Chapters and members who are trying to counter harmful scope-of-practice legislative campaigns at the state level.

Thank you for your understanding and input as we continue to fight for pediatricians in the public policy arena. I assure you that the AAP leadership sees the big picture and will try to do what is best for its members. Thank you for doing your part in your practices and your Chapters at this critical time in the history of US medicine.

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