

MEDICAL HOME

A *Medical Home* is an approach to delivering continual patient care through a collaborative "team partnership" that ensures health care services are provided in a high quality, cost effective and comprehensive manner.

The "team partnership" concept of the medical home approach ensures that the unique expertise of all providers is brought to the system in a coordinated fashion for the benefit of the patient.

The Medical Home concept in Iowa must include the following:

- A focus on a coordinated system of collaborative team care as compared to the traditional fragmented approach to patient care.
- Widespread adoption of information technology for care management and quality improvement, where information is shared among team members.
- Focus on chronic care prevention and management.
- A clarification of the roles played by health care professionals as medical home partners.

PHARMACY COMPONENT OF THE MEDICAL HOME CONCEPT

As the Institute of Medicine has noted *"...because of the immense variety and complexity of medications now available ... the pharmacist has become an essential resource ... and thus access to his or her expertise must be possible at all times"*.

Two out of every three patients who visit a doctor leave with at least one prescription for medication, leading to a record volume of nearly 3.4 billion prescriptions dispensed in 2005 alone. This is an increase of almost 60% since 1995. Two-thirds of the US population received at least one prescription per year, and close to 40% receive prescriptions for four or more medications.

Proper use of prescription medications helps improve quality of life and health outcomes. However, the health care system incurs more than \$177 billion annually in mostly avoidable health care costs to treat adverse events from inappropriate medication use. The proper use of medication becomes even more important as treatment of chronic disease costs the health care system \$1.3 trillion annually, or about 75 cents of every health care dollar.

Pharmacists have extensive clinical knowledge and expertise in the use of medications, and are one of the most accessible of all health care professionals. This makes them uniquely positioned in the health care system to help patients optimize appropriate medication use, reduce medication related problems and improve health outcomes through the delivery of pharmacist-provided patient care services, including medication therapy management (MTM), health promotion and education, and disease prevention and mitigation.

The IOM report, *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century*, identifies six aims for health care system improvement: safety, effectiveness, patient-centeredness, timeliness, efficiency, and equity all important elements of the medical home concept. With these objectives in mind, two broad goals related to medication access and use are offered that should be integral parts of the medical home concept.

- Recognizing the role of pharmacists to help ensure that medication therapy is safe, effective, equitable, patient-centered, and results in quality outcomes;
- Expanding the use of health information technology to support full integration of pharmacists as part of the medical home partnership team.