

Humanizing the Healthcare System and Dissecting the Complex:

Family Physicians as Leaders

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Learning Objectives

- Identify key traits and necessary skills for leaders in the current US healthcare system
- Describe common characteristics of family physicians and unique aspects of their training requirements and practice settings that make them well-suited for healthcare leadership
- Discuss options for increasing explicit leadership training for family physicians in residency and in practice

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Introduction

- The leadership gap in our health systems
 - What traits make good leaders?
 - What skills do leaders need?
- Why family physicians are ideally suited to step into these roles
- Preparing to lead diverse teams

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Current Situation for Family Physicians

- Largest practicing discipline
- Chameleon-like response to serve the needs of the community or health system
 - Represents the continuum of care
 - Manages and eases the transitions of care
 - Clinical roles in outpatient continuity clinics, ED, hospital, OB and urgent care
 - C-suite
 - Community, FQHC, free clinics, etc.
 - Public health, government

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Characteristics of Family Physicians

- See the bigger picture
- Comfort with uncertainty and ambiguity
 - Undifferentiated, broad populations
 - Used to managing many shades of gray
- Balance and breadth of experience
 - Understanding of many areas and aspects of medicine
- Adept at change
- Comfortable with multi-tasking
- Natural command of the complex

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Contrast with other Leaders

- Clinical understanding and appreciation
 - Keeps patient at center
- Compared to other clinical leaders
 - Wide experience
 - Comfort in all clinical areas and with all patient populations
 - Broad perspective
 - Longitudinal investment
 - Can adapt to variety of leadership models/approaches

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Potential Pitfalls of Family Physician Leaders

- “Too nice”
 - Difficulty tackling tough/unpopular decisions
- “Jack of all trades, master of none”
 - Broad experience at the expense of depth
- Too altruistic and not based in “reality”
 - Not focused on the financial realities of healthcare

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Role of the Family Physician in the Health System

- Patient/person focused
 - Well-practiced “people skills”
- Family and community minded
- Global coordinator of complex care
- Trained to understand and navigate within the entire system
- Invested in continuous healing relationships

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Leadership Training During Residency

- Leadership does not fit into a 4-week rotation
- Longitudinal elective
- There is no leadership curriculum “in a box”
 - Background/baseline didactics
 - Workshops
 - ***Experiential***
- Chief resident
 - Just scheduling, logistics, resident conflicts?
 - Curriculum w/structured and facilitated experiential mentoring and teaching

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Next Steps and Recommendations

- Health systems to elevate family physicians into leadership roles
 - Unique opportunities during the pandemic
- Facilitate leadership training at the national level
 - For residents, faculty and practicing physicians
 - AAFP
 - STFM
 - Other physician executive organizations

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Questions?

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