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STFM LAUNCHES INITIATIVE TO POSITION ACADEMIC FAMILY MEDICINE IN HEALTH SYSTEMS

Family physicians have been at the center of the response to COVID-19,^{1,2} and the pandemic has underscored what was already an urgent need for more family physicians. The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates a primary care physician shortage of up to 55,200 by 2033.³

Over the past few decades, most family physicians have transitioned from private practice to employed practices.⁴ Throughout this transition—for a number of reasons—there has been a general reduction in scope of practice, in spite of evidence that primary care is “associated with better health outcomes, lower costs, and greater health equity.”⁵

To address the changing employment landscape for academic family physicians, faculty, and learners, the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine has launched a new initiative to:

- preserve comprehensive practice for family physicians and family medicine faculty who wish to practice broad scope
- ensure that family medicine faculty—including community preceptors in non-academic settings—have sufficient time and institutional resources to teach and meet academic and accreditation requirements
- improve faculty and learner well-being
- transform family medicine training sites into clinical and teaching models of excellence

The initiative will be chaired by Christine Arenson, MD. “This is a critical time for family medicine,” said Dr Arenson. “We have the evidence we need that team-based family medicine, with physicians operating with a broad scope of practice, is critical to improve health and health equity while reducing the total cost of health care for our nation. And yet we also know that traditionally structured health care systems are not designed or prepared to meet this mission.”

As the chair of the initiative, Dr Arenson will work with STFM staff to convene workgroups to develop and deliver training, build connections with health systems leaders, and advocate for family medicine.

Specifically, the initiative will:

Train Family Medicine Educators and Learners on the Business of Medicine

Because most family physicians are employed by health care systems, it is important that physician training leads to an understanding of the business of medicine and how system leaders make decisions. This knowledge is fundamental to business-based solutions that incorporate the needs of medical education, family medicine, and health systems.

Make the Business Case for Investment in Primary Care/Family Medicine

There aren't enough family physicians to meet the nation's health care needs,³ and there is a shortage of family medicine faculty.⁶ Faculty are struggling with workload/administrative burden/competing priorities.⁷ Communications to health care system leaders will advocate for equitable resource allocation and

solutions that meet the needs of family physicians and family medicine training programs.

Preserve Comprehensive Practice for Family Physicians and Family Medicine Faculty Who Wish to Practice Broad Scope

There have been concerns for decades that family medicine's scope of practice is decreasing. There is a substantial gap "between the training and preparation family medicine residents receive and the services they deliver in practice."⁸ This initiative will promote the connection between comprehensive practice and reduced burnout and define a training pathway for those who want to re-enter the family medicine workforce or who have been practicing under a limited scope

This Health Systems Initiative addresses multiple strategies and tactics in the new STFM Strategic Plan and builds on STFM's work on the Preceptor Expansion Initiative and Protected Faculty Time Guidelines, and aligns with the collaborative efforts of the family medicine organizations to engage with health systems leaders to preserve comprehensive training and practice for family physicians, improve health outcomes, and identify and spread best practices for optimizing the role of family medicine.

Mary Theobald, MBA, Chief of Strategy and Innovation, Society of Teachers of Family Medicine

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PUSHING BOUNDARIES FROM THE MIDAIR SUSPENSION OF A PANDEMIC

Early this year, in what seems like a lifetime ago, the NAPCRG Board of Directors decided to host its spring meeting virtually in response to what was then a new virus. Over the next few months, COVID-19 spread across the globe and infiltrated all parts of our lives. By May, a new, virtual reality culminated in a different kind of board meeting where the first order of business was commiseration. We shared stories about the virus' impact on personal and professional lives and assessed uncertainty in the year ahead. Calling attention to this liminal space, as though trapped in a holding pattern before landing, we had to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. For many, the time has been filled with the chaos of clinical care ranging from early morning hospital rounds to late night phone calls with patients and students and family. COVID-19 has triggered both a personal and business imperative for change.

And now, as COVID continues to disrupt and discourage, the NAPCRG Annual Meeting has transformed. Long cherished as "home" for primary care research, the meeting will be a welcome respite to a challenging year. Untethered from familiar hotel ballrooms, our new home will span boundaries of geography, time, and space. We are explorers in a digital divide that enables access and disconnection in equal measure. At the time of this writing, we do not know whether we will be celebrating relief from a vaccine, managing a new surge, or holding more liminal space. What we do know is that the meeting will celebrate primary care and the research that propels it.

The NAPCRG Annual Meeting is still your home. Join us November 20-24, 2020 for cutting-edge education and innovation. CME will be provided, and programming will include presentations and interactive discussions with a special focus on late-breaking COVID research. Now more than ever, researchers need a place to share knowledge, insights, and camaraderie. An online poster hall and plenary speakers will provide wide-ranging perspective adjusted like a lens for close depth or broader distance. Presenters will include Mark Smith, MD, MBA and Paula Brave-man, MD, MPH and a COVID-19 Panel consisting of Rebecca Etz, PhD; Trisha Greenhalgh, OBE, FRCP, FRCGP, FMedSci; Michael Kidd, MD, MBBS; Ross Upshur, BA(Hons), MA, MD, MSc. Enjoy networking with familiar faces and new acquaintances. Music