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Family Physicians Announce Major Patient Care Improvements and Nearly One Million Dollars Saved in Fresno Health Care Project

Moving to Patient-Centered Medical Home Model Brings Major Improvements

San Francisco – Based on the newly reported success of a patient-centered medical home (PCMH) project in Fresno, leaders of the California Academy of Family Physicians are calling on the State and private health plans to adopt this care-delivery model, combined with a new payment model, to improve patients' health statewide.

In the Fresno PCMH pilot project, several care measures were substantially improved while savings totaled nearly a million dollars over 12 months. Launched in July 2012, the project is a collaboration of CAFP, the self-insured Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) and a primary care physician group, Community Medical Providers. The pilot included 2,500 patients (10 percent of FUSD's beneficiaries).

"Our goals were to improve the quality of care in specific disease areas including diabetes, cardiovascular disease and behavioral health, improve prevention and medication adherence, and reduce costs associated with emergency room visits, hospital admissions and prescription drugs," said CAFP President Mark Dressner, MD. "The primary care practices in this project succeeded in all of these areas."

At the end of the year-long pilot, "the number of patients with diabetes for whom blood sugar had been confirmed as under control increased by 50 percent," Dr. Dressner said. "Among patients with diabetes and patients with coronary artery disease, blood pressure control and LDL (a cholesterol measure) control increased significantly. Breast cancer screening and body mass index counseling increased across the entire patient population and patient satisfaction improved."

Medication adherence among high-risk members increased, he said, while high-risk member costs decreased and overall inpatient admissions and emergency department visits also decreased. "The cost of total claims decreased by nine percent for a gross savings of \$972,519," Dr. Dressner added.

"These results suggest that this model improves quality and decreases costs," said Fresno Unified Chief Financial Officer Ruthie Quinto, who also is a co-chair of the Joint Health Management Board, a labor and management group that oversees the School District's health care plan. "Ultimately, we are looking for better outcomes for our members and fulfilling our

mission of providing the highest quality healthcare for the best value. As a board, we are committed to validating the data regularly through independent analysis."

The Fresno improvements were achieved because of key practice changes, Dr. Dressner said, including adding a complex case manager who proactively reached out to high-risk patients; a quality improvement coach who coordinated ongoing change measurement, management and feedback; and patient registries to better track care.

Such practice changes were made possible by a three-tiered blended payment model that included the usual fee-for-service payments for visits and services; a care coordination and health information technology upgrade fee; and bonus payments for achieving quality improvements and cost reductions.

"Health care as we know it is going to change," said Community Medical Providers Medical Director Grant Nakamura, MD, a family physician and CAFP member. "The patient-centered medical home is going to be a significant part of health care. It's more about delivering a service when it's needed. It's not even worrying about the cost – it's delivering appropriate care, measuring the outcomes, and doing the right thing for the patient."

CAFP is calling on public and private payers to adopt both the PCMH and blended payment models to incentivize delivery of higher-quality, lower-cost care. CAFP also is calling on the State of California to use its policies and resources to encourage adoption of the models. "The State can play an important role in encouraging the growth of medical homes and payment that supports them, including through the State Innovation Model Initiative," Dr. Dressner said. "The State also has the unique ability to convene payers and enable them to act as a group, adopt this model expansively and support a statewide, all-payer PCMH project. Our pilot project results make it clear that we should act now on behalf of patients across California."

About the California Academy of Family Physicians: *With more than 8,300 members, including active practicing family physicians, residents in family medicine, and medical students interested in the specialty, CAFP is the largest primary care medical society in California. Family physicians are trained to treat an entire family's medical needs, addressing the whole spectrum of life's medical challenges. FPs serve a broad base of patients in urban, suburban and rural areas, often in California's most underserved areas.*