

Advancing Family Medicine Research in Alignment with National Funding Priorities

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Introduction

Family medicine is a vital discipline in the field of healthcare, focusing on providing comprehensive, patient-centered care that addresses the diverse needs of individuals, families, and communities. As family medicine practitioners and researchers, it is essential to align our research priorities with the strategic goals and initiatives of prominent health organizations such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). By doing so, we can maximize our impact in promoting health, reducing health disparities, and enhancing the delivery of care. In this editorial, we will explore the common themes and priority areas of these organizations and propose how family medicine research can contribute to achieving their missions.

What are common themes across NIH, HRSA, PCORI, and CDC?

The NIH, HRSA, PCORI, and CDC are sources of national funding that either have significant financial support and/or directly align their efforts with a foundation that is ripe for primary care. Even the NIH, which has typically been seen as a source of funding for basic science research, has shifted some of their funding priorities to encompass areas with a primary care flavor. Below are common themes across these four prominent groups:

1. **Health Equity:** All four organizations share a commitment to achieving health equity. HRSA explicitly focuses on improving health outcomes and achieving health equity through access to quality services, while NIH emphasizes minority health and health disparities as a cross-cutting theme. PCORI aims to expand stakeholder engagement, research, and dissemination approaches that lead to continued progress toward achieving health equity. In family medicine research, it is imperative to prioritize studies that address health disparities and promote equitable healthcare delivery, especially in underserved communities.

2. **Innovation and Research:** NIH, as the cornerstone of biomedical research, leads in foundational science, disease prevention, health promotion, and the cure of diseases. HRSA supports innovation by advancing telehealth and training the next generation of health professionals. PCORI is dedicated to comparative clinical effectiveness research, and the CDC emphasizes real-time monitoring and outbreak analytics. Family medicine research should leverage these opportunities for innovation to develop new care models, interventions, and technologies that enhance patient and community outcomes.

3. **Team Science:** Collaboration is a central theme for all four organizations. The NIH emphasizes partnerships and collaborative science. PCORI aims to enhance the infrastructure for patient-centered outcomes research, while the CDC underscores collaboration at both domestic

and global levels. Family medicine research should encourage interdisciplinary teamwork and cross-sectoral collaboration to address complex healthcare challenges effectively.

What are 5 Priority Areas that Family Medicine Research Can Embrace Based on National Funding Priorities?

Based on the mission, vision, and common themes from the NIH, CDC, PCORI, and HRSA, there are several areas where family medicine research can play a leading role. While not all encompassing—particularly with the variety of researchers in our discipline—this list affords an opportunity for developing us as leaders in specific spaces. Areas for us to consider include:

- 1. Chronic Disease Management:** Chronic diseases represent a significant burden on our healthcare system. Family medicine research should focus on developing and evaluating innovative approaches for preventing, diagnosing, and managing chronic diseases in primary care settings, particularly among vulnerable populations.
- 2. Health Promotion:** Promoting health and preventing disease is a core mission for family medicine. Research should prioritize strategies for health promotion, behavior change, and lifestyle interventions (e.g. physical activity, nutrition, mental health, sleep, etc.) that can be integrated into routine primary care practice and promote patient engagement in their health.
- 3. Enhanced Healthcare Delivery and Technology Integration:** The NIH's emphasis on data science and HRSA's support for telehealth provide opportunities for family medicine to leverage technology for better patient care. Research should explore the integration of technology, including electronic health records, wearables, and telemedicine, into primary care practice to improve patient outcomes and access, which are hallmarks of NASEM report. Part of the advancements in technology may include artificial intelligence and genomics to enhance personalized care. Additionally, the CDC's emphasis on rapid response and global capacity can inform family medicine research in developing more efficient and effective healthcare delivery models. This includes exploring telemedicine, community-based care, and care coordination to enhance patient access and quality of care.
- 4. Patient-Centered Outcomes:** PCORI's focus on patient-centered outcomes aligns well with family medicine's commitment to patient-centered care. Family medicine research should prioritize studies that measure and improve patient-reported outcomes, patient experience, and shared decision-making.
- 5. Team-Based Care:** The importance of teamwork and collaboration is underscored by both NIH and CDC. Family medicine research should investigate the effectiveness of team-based care models, emphasizing the role of various healthcare professionals, including nurses, psychologists, advanced practice providers, pharmacists, dietitians, and social workers, in improving patient outcomes.

Conclusion

In aligning family medicine research with the missions and priorities of NIH, HRSA, PCORI, and CDC, we can contribute significantly to advancing the goals of these organizations while promoting the health and well-being of individuals and communities. By prioritizing research areas such as chronic disease management, health promotion, enhanced healthcare delivery and technology integration, patient-centered outcomes, and team-based care, family medicine researchers can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of healthcare, ensuring equitable access, and improving health outcomes for all. Our discipline is uniquely positioned to lead in these areas, and our research initiatives should reflect this commitment to patient, family, and community-centered care.

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