

## Research Agenda for the Center for Primary Care Research

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality • 2101 East Jefferson Street • Rockville, MD 20852



AHRQ is the lead Federal agency charged with supporting research designed to improve the quality of health care, reduce its cost, address patient safety and medical errors, and broaden access to essential services. AHRQ sponsors and conducts research that provides evidence-based information on health care outcomes; quality; and cost, use, and access. The information helps health care decisionmakers—patients and clinicians, health system leaders, and policymakers—make more informed decisions and improve the quality of health care services.



U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services  
Public Health Service

### Background

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ's) Center for Primary Care Research (CPCR) is dedicated to conducting and supporting research on the provision of primary care, including the systems and policies that affect practices.<sup>1</sup>

CPCR's primary care research agenda extends beyond traditional health services research to address a broad range of issues in the clinical and social sciences. The agenda involves studies conducted in primary care settings, as well as the analysis of secondary data, and addresses both extramural (sponsored through grant funds) and intramural (conducted by staff) research. CPCR's major research areas are:

1. First contact care, when illness or health concerns arise;
2. The natural history, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of health conditions seen in primary care settings, including the management of commonly occurring and undifferentiated clinical problems;
3. The nature, characteristics, and organization of primary care practice;
4. Health care decision-making and the relationship between the

clinician and the patient in the context of the family and community; and

5. The continuity and coordination of primary care services, including referrals and the interface of primary and specialty care.

### CPCR Research Agenda

While acknowledging that CPCR's research agenda is constantly evolving in response to changes in research knowledge, primary care practice and policy, and staff and investigator interests, the following list briefly highlights CPCR's current areas of research interest, with examples of relevant topics in each area:

#### Integrated care

- Coordination of services across providers and sites of care.
- Communication and information transfer, including the role of information technology.

#### Quality

- Monitoring, understanding, and reducing racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic disparities.
- Assessing and improving the quality of primary care.

#### Accessible Health Care Services

- Impact of usual source of care on use of primary and specialty care.
- Evaluating different models of providing access to care.

<sup>1</sup>For a more comprehensive definition developed by a committee of the Institute of Medicine see: *Primary Care: America's Health in a New Era*, National Academy Press, 1996



- Assessing cultural competency and its impact on primary care.

#### **Workforce**

- Role of generalists and specialists in the delivery of health care services.
- Issues of workforce planning.
- How health care working conditions affect primary care providers and the care they provide.

#### **Addressing the Full Range of Personal Health Needs**

- Health services access and utilization, including curative and preventive treatment, wellness care, and alternative care.
- Historically understudied areas of primary care, such as mental health, dental care, and social services, and their impact on health status and outcomes.

#### **Developing Sustained Partnerships With Patients**

- Shared decision making and the effect of sustained provider–patient relationships on prevention, acute and chronic care, and well being.
- Communication and information transfer between patients and providers.

#### **Family and Community**

- How social support and social networks influence health care, and the role of family and culture in health-seeking activities and clinical decision making.
- Role of community-based organizations and institutions on access to care, including care in the home.

#### **Review Process**

All extramural and intramural research supported by AHRQ is peer reviewed by individuals with appropriate expertise. Applications for extramural research grants can be submitted by both public and private organizations and are formally reviewed by a study section or special emphasis panel for scientific and technical merit. Decisions on funding approved extramural research applications are based on the quality of the proposed project, availability of funds, and program balance among research areas. Through the Center's concept paper review process, CPRC staff are able to provide an initial review of potential primary care-related projects prior to the submission of a formal grant application. Proposals for intramural research (to be conducted by CPRC staff) are also peer-reviewed for technical merit, relevance to the CPRC research agenda, and potential contribution to the AHRQ strategic plan and to the peer-reviewed literature.

#### **For Further Information**

Additional information can be obtained from the CPRC section of the AHRQ Web site (<http://www.ahrq.gov/primarix.html>) or by contacting:

Helen Burstin  
Center for Primary Care Research  
Agency for Healthcare Research and  
Quality  
6010 Executive Boulevard, Suite 201  
Rockville, MD 20852  
(301) 594-1357  
hburstin@ahrq.gov

