

Home Based Primary Care: Meeting the Needs of the Frailest Health System Elders

According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 5% of Medicare beneficiaries generate 50% of Medicare Expenditures. These individuals with serious chronic medical illnesses are often homebound. In addition to their chronic medical problems, homebound adults have functional limitations that require assistance from informal caregivers in at least one activity of daily living (ADL) and often cognitive and behavioral health disorders that impact disease and symptom management. Homebound patients are among the most vulnerable for poor health outcomes. They experience higher mortality even after controlling for background, health status and functional variations. Despite the high healthcare needs of the homebound population, few patients are able to see a physician in their home.

The Physician House Calls (PHC) program is a home based primary care (HBPC) practice in Akron, Ohio and the surrounding region. Eligible patients must meet specific medical, cognitive or functional criteria. Physicians and nurse practitioners in the program provide primary care along with an interprofessional team of primary care physicians, geriatricians, nursing, medical assistants, social workers and office personnel. Though the program has been operational for many years, there are increasing gaps in care that necessitate a re-evaluation of the program and a re-alignment with practice and health-system goals. The proposed project seeks to enhance the current program by expanding providers participating in the interprofessional team and through better integration with the community through community based providers, the health system's affiliated home health care and hospice agencies, and behavioral health providers.