

Carolyn B. Holly Essay Contest
Abstract Submission
September 2024

Sophia Koo

The changing landscape of primary care necessitates a concomitant advancement in our approach to its practice. Drawing inspiration from the Patient-Centered Medical Home (PC-MH) model pioneered by the Southeast Texas Medical Associates (SETMA), I propose three ways in which the framework of primary care can be adapted for the current healthcare system: 1) improving cultural understanding among health care providers, leveraging artificial intelligence (AI), and integrating dentistry into primary care. To address the importance of cultural competence in a nation of rapidly growing diversity, I suggest the implementation of ongoing cultural training programs to educate providers about area-specific patient demographics and the use of electronic medical records (EMR) to document culturally relevant patient information. This can facilitate communication between providers, improve provider-patient relationships, and streamline future interactions for best patient outcomes. Another valuable technological tool, AI, can be used to improve diagnostic capabilities, enhance administrative efficacy, and individualize patient care plans. From using AI diagnostics to inform future screening guidelines to implementing programs to deliver patient reminders, artificial intelligence – when utilized carefully and in conjunction with existing medical practices – can significantly improve the patient experience. Finally, the integration of dentistry into the PC-MH primary care model can close the gap between oral health and systemic diseases to improve continuity of care, patient outcomes, and access to dental services, particularly for vulnerable populations. I propose that these three strategies can create an even better future for primary care: one that is efficient, comprehensive, and responsive to the patient’s holistic needs.