



John Hickner, MD, MSc Editor-in-Chief

Arm them with evidence

ealth care in this country is at the beginning of a major overhaul, and not just because of "Obamacare." It is because medical care is getting too darned expensive, and patients, payers, and employers are fed up with the high cost. The good news for family physicians is that virtually everyone finally realizes that a strong primary care presence is essential for both successful cost containment and high-quality

But the people most able to bring about significant health care cost savings are not physicians at all. They are our patients. Those who eat properly, exercise regularly, don't smoke, and drink alcohol in moderation typically need less medical care. For people who have chronic illnesses, good "patient self-management" - a pillar of the patient-centered medical home—makes it less likely that they'll land in the hospital or ED, resulting in lower costs and better outcomes.

To be most effective, patient self-management must be based on solid evidence just like any treatment.

But that's not always the case.

Daily blood glucose checks used to be the standard of care for patients with

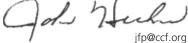
The people most able to contain health care spending are not physicians at all—they're our patients.

type 2 diabetes. But it turns out this is a medical myth, improperly extrapolated from data on patients with type 1 diabetes. A number of excellent randomized trials have shown marginal benefit at best from routine self-monitoring for patients with type 2 diabetes. (The evidence is detailed in this month's Clinical Inquiries starting on page 39.)

For many patients with type 2 diabetes, checking blood sugar weekly or even monthly is sufficient. (Others should do glucose checks several times a day to titrate insulin doses.) We could save millions by teach-

ing patients to check their blood sugar only when it's appropriate, thereby reducing the number of glucose monitoring strips they use.

Which brings me to another way we can improve patient self management: Treat each patient as an individual. That is family medicine—and medical care—at its best. It costs less than cookie-cutter medicine, and leads to better outcomes.





EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

JOHN HICKNER, MD, MS

Cleveland Clinic ASSOCIATE EDITORS

BERNARD EWIGMAN, MD, MSPH

University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine

JOHN SAULTZ, MD

Oregon Health and Science University, Portland (Clinical Inquiries)

RICHARD P. USATINE, MD

University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (Photo Rounds)

ASSISTANT EDITORS

DOUG CAMPOS-OUTCALT, MD, MPA

University of Arizona, Phoenix

GARY N. FOX. MD

St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center, Toledo,

RICK GUTHMANN, MD, MPH University of Illinois, Chicago

KEITH B. HOLTEN, MD

Berger Health System, Circleville, Ohio

ROBERT B. KELLY, MD, MS

Fairview Hospital, a Cleveland Clinic hospital

GARY KELSBERG, MD, FAAFP

University of Washington, Renton

AUDREY PAULMAN, MD, MMM

University of Nebraska College of Medicine,

PAUL M. PAULMAN, MD

University of Nebraska College of Medicine, Omaha

E. CHRIS VINCENT, MD

University of Washington, Seattle

EDITORIAL BOARD

FREDERICK CHEN, MD, MPH

University of Washington, Seattle

LARRY CULPEPPER, MD, MPH Boston University Medical Center, Mass

LINDA FRENCH, MD

University of Toledo, Ohio

THEODORE G. GANIATS, MD

University of California-San Diego. La Jolla, Calif

JEFFREY T. KIRCHNER, DO. FAAFP, AAHIVS Lancaster General Hospital, Lancaster, Pa

FRED MISER, MD, MA

The Ohio State University, Columbus

JANE L. MURRAY, MD

Sastun Center of Integrative Health Care,

Overland Park, Kan

KEVIN PETERSON, MD, MPH University of Minnesota, St. Paul

GOUTHAM RAO, MD, MPA

University of Chicago JEFFREY R. UNGER, MD

Catalina Research Institute, Chino, Calif

BARBARA P. YAWN, MD, MSC Olmsted Medical Center, Rochester, Minn

DIRECT EDITORIAL INFORMATION

AND INQUIRIES TO:

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Cleveland Clinic Mail Code G-10

9500 Fuclid Avenue

Cleveland, OH 44195 Telephone: (216) 445-8915

PUBLISHING OFFICES

Quadrant HealthCom, a division of Frontline Medical Communications Inc. 7 Century Drive, Suite 302 Parsippany, NJ 07054 Telephone: (973) 206-3434 Fax: (973) 206-9378