What to look for in a PCP

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Biography/Disclaimer

• I am a primary care physician
• I run a primary care practice
• I teach primary care
• I do research about primary care

• …especially Family Medicine…

I’m a little biased…
How to use this talk…

• To find a new primary care physician…
• To improve things with your current primary care physician…
• To help others talk to their primary care physicians…
What is Primary Care?
Primary Care

- Continuous
- First-contact
- Comprehensive
- Coordinated
- Also
  - Family-oriented
  - Community-oriented
  - Culturally competent
Primary Care

• In numerous studies around the world, primary care improves health.
  – It’s the only part of medical care that does.
What is a PCP?
PCP

• Primary Care…
  – Physician?
  – Provider?

• MDs, DOs, NPs, PAs

• Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Ob-Gyn, Adolescent Medicine
  – (others depending on context)
PCP

- Family Medicine
- General Internal Medicine
- Pediatrics
- Ob-Gyn
- Nurse Practitioner
- Physician’s Assistant
Primary Care Provider

• Relationship is the most important thing…
  – First contact
  – Continuous
  – Comprehensive
  – Coordinated
Primary Care Provider

- “Specialist in YOU”
- Expert tools
  - Communication – all forms
  - Breadth of knowledge, not depth
  - “That darn electronic record…."
  - Access
Primary Care Provider

- Expertise
  - Health Promotion/Disease Prevention
  - Undifferentiated Illness
  - Multimorbidity
  - “address [90-99]% of what walks in the door”
Primary care...

- ...more than the doctor/provider
- The whole team is critical.
Patient Centered Medical Home

• Personal physician
• “Physician directed medical practice”
• Whole person orientation
• Care is coordinated
• Quality and safety
• Enhanced access to care
• Payment
Payment???

• Primary runs on small margins
• Current system pays mostly for visits and procedures
Payment???

• Payment for:
  – Non-visit work (forms, calls, etc.)
  – Coordination of care
  – Email/telephone consultation
  – Increased costs of technology
  – Cost savings *preserving* quality and satisfaction
New models of primary care

- “accountable care”
  - “capitation” with agreements for quality and patient satisfaction
- “direct primary care”
  - Your company contracts with a practice for accountable care
- “concierge medicine”
  - Fee for enhanced access
How can you help?

• Do your research
  – Word of mouth/referral
  – “Best Doctor” sites
  – Online reviews?
How can you help?

• Be prepared and organized
  – Know your medical history
  – Know your medications
  – Be familiar with your insurance
  – Know how long your appointment is
How can you help?

• Speak up
  – Lists are OK
  – Tell us what’s on your mind
    • We all have the uncle with the weird medical opinions…might as well…
  – Ask clarifying questions
  – Ask for an after-visit summary, and use it!
  – Go with a buddy
How can you help?

• NEVER ASSUME…always get the answers…
  – Test results
  – Referrals
When choosing a PCP, also consider the following:

- Is the office staff friendly and helpful?
- Is the office good about returning calls?
- Are the office hours convenient to your schedule?
- How easy is it to reach the provider? Does the provider use email?
- Do you prefer a provider whose communication style is friendly and warm, or more formal?
- Do you prefer a provider focused on disease treatment, or wellness and prevention?
- Does the provider have a conservative or aggressive approach to treatment?
- Does the provider order a lot of tests?
- Does the provider refer to other specialists frequently or infrequently?
- What do colleagues and patients say about the provider?
- Does the provider invite you to be involved in your care? Does the provider view your patient-doctor relationship as a true partnership?
Medline Plus

• You can get referrals from:
  – Friends, neighbors, or relatives
  – Medical associations, nursing associations, and associations for physician assistants
  – Your dentist, pharmacist, optometrist, previous provider, or other health professional
  – Advocacy groups may be especially helpful to find the best provider for a specific chronic condition or disability
Medline Plus

• Many insurance plans limit the providers you can choose from
• Health insurance plan websites/directories
• Interview appointment or open house
• If no PCP → Urgent care for an urgent problem

https://medlineplus.gov/
Myths/Other comments

• Won’t NPs and PAs do all the primary care in the future?
Myths/Other comments

• PCPs are either just “referral machines” or “gatekeepers.”
Myths/Other comments

• The more expertise/technology the better…
Myths/Other comments

• In a 15 minute visit, the PCP spends”
  – 30 min with someone else…
  – 10 min fighting with the electronic record
  – 2 minutes on an urgent phone call
  – 3 minutes on my history/physical
Objectives

• Describe and advocate for the benefits of primary care.

• Describe the different medical professionals that can comprise a primary care patient-centered medical home.

• Maximize your relationship with your primary care provider.