



DISCUSSION TOPIC:

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Standing Committee on Primary Care: An objective venue to inform primary care policy

Why this is important (brief description):

Formation of the federal Initiative for Primary Health Care to coordinate and prioritize primary care activities across the federal government is a critical step for improving primary care in the US. It is equally important to enable external experts in primary care policy, research, and clinical care to provide input on urgent needs and priorities as primary care policy evolves. The newly launched NASEM Standing Committee on Primary Care, that will comprise individuals with expertise in primary care delivery; clinician training and education; health care administration; health disparities; technologies for health care innovation (e.g. AI and telehealth); federal, state and local health care and public health programs; health care finance; health care policy; integrated health care delivery; and team-based care, will serve this role. The Standing Committee will provide a venue for input that is independent, objective, and evidence-based to inform policy, spark progress and innovation, and confront challenging issues facing primary care today and in the future.

What We Think We Know (Bulleted evidence + Seminal references):

The 2021 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) report, *Implementing High-Quality Primary Care: Rebuilding the Foundation of Health Care*, outlined an implementation framework with recommendations for federal, state, and local policy makers, health systems, educational institutions, the interprofessional workforce, and others across the health care ecosystem to ensure that high-quality primary care is available for everyone in the United States (NASEM, 2021).

- Based on one of the report's recommendations, the Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Agriculture, launched the Initiative for Primary Health Care in September of 2021 to coordinate and prioritize primary care activities across the federal government (Department of Health and Human Services, 2022).
- This is a critical step for improving primary care in the US, but it is equally important to enable external experts in primary care policy, research, and clinical care to provide input on urgent needs and priorities as primary care policy evolves.
- The NASEM Standing Committee on Primary Care will provide a venue for external stakeholder input that is independent, objective, and evidence-based to inform policy, spark progress and innovation, and confront challenging issues facing primary care today and in the future (NASEM, 2023).
- Unlike NASEM consensus study committees that often deliberate in closed session and issue broad and comprehensive reports, standing committees are ongoing activities with more public interactions that shine a national spotlight on a specific topic area.
- The Standing Committee on Primary Care will help ensure that policy development and implementation decisions address the realities of on-the-ground primary care delivery needs and reflect the latest research across all policy domains.

- The Standing Committee on Primary Care will host public meetings with invited panelists and stakeholder discussions and may issue white papers on focused topics to help inform the field and the Initiative for Primary Health Care.
- Its activities will be timely and responsive to the implementation plans of the Initiative for Primary Health Care, questions from sponsors, as well as the latest research and emerging changes in primary care policy and practice around the country.
- Because NASEM standing committees can be formulated to comply with section 15 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)¹, the Standing Committee on Primary Care is ideally suited to serve in this role.
- It will be a transparent mechanism for stakeholder participation and a layer of accountability that can help inform smart, evidence-based, and innovative policy implementation that reflects the real-world realities and best practices and will be an important contribution to making high-quality primary care more available to all people across the United States.
- The structure of the Standing Committee on Primary Care and its inclusion of external stakeholders could potentially be a model for any country developing and implementing meaningful policy change that seeks to address the real-world needs and realities throughout their country.

Questions for Group Consideration:

1. What are the most pressing concerns facing primary care delivery throughout the United States that are currently overlooked by federal policy?
2. If you could choose 3 topics for the standing committee to address, what would they be?
3. Is the NASEM standing committee a practical model for other countries to seek external input on health care policy (primary care or otherwise)? What are some potential barriers (political or structural) countries may face if they attempt to do something similar?

¹Section 15 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) stipulates the legal requirements that NASEM committees must comply with if they are providing advice, recommendations, or findings and conclusions to the Federal government Pub. L. 105–153, §2(b).

REFERENCES:

Department of Health and Human Services. 2022. Fact sheet: Hhs initiative to strengthen primary health care seeking public comment. [https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/06/27/fact-sheet-hhs-initiative-to-strengthen-primary-health-care-seeking-public-](https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/06/27/fact-sheet-hhs-initiative-to-strengthen-primary-health-care-seeking-public)

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NASEM. 2021. Implementing high-quality primary care: Rebuilding the foundation of health care. Edited by L. McCauley, R. L. Phillips, Jr., M. Meisner and S. K. Robinson. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

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