Exploring Local Primary Care and Public Health Collaboration: A Practice-based Approach

Laura-Mae Baldwin, Northwest Center for Public Health Practice, University of Washington, Regional Network Steering Committee Meeting
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Led by the Minnesota Department of Health—Beth Gyllstrom, PI
**Minnesota**

Beth Gyllstrom, PhD, MPH, Principle Investigator, University of Minnesota
Rebekah Pratt, PhD, Co-Principal Investigator, University of Minnesota
Kim Gearin, PhD, MS, Co-Investigator, MDH
Carol Lange, MPH, Co-Investigator, UMN
Kevin Peterson, MD, MPH, Co-Investigator, UMN

**Colorado**

Lisa Van Raemdonck, MPH, CO Association of Local Public Health Officials

**Washington**

Betty Bekemeier, PhD, MPH, MSN, RN, University of WA
Laura-Mae Baldwin, MD, MPH, University of WA

**Wisconsin**

Susan Zahner, PhD, RN, University of WI-Madison
David Hahn, MD, MS, University of WI-Madison

**Minneapolis**

Don Nease, MD, University of CO-Denver
Health Care and Public Health

• U.S. has the most expensive health care system, yet health care is estimated to contribute to only about 20% of the nation’s health.

• Increased collaboration between primary care and public health crucial to improving population health

• Accountable Care Act provides new incentives and expectations for such partnerships
Research Questions

• How does the degree of integration between primary care and public health vary across local jurisdictions?

• What factors facilitate or inhibit integration, and how can PC and PH increase integration?

• Does the degree of integration differ based on health topic?

• Do areas of greater integration have better health outcomes?
Study Design & Timeline

The study combines existing health data with new data collected through telephone interviews, an on-line survey, and focus groups.

2014: Key informant interviews with PC providers and PH leaders
2015: Online survey of larger sample of PC providers and PH leaders
2016: Analysis, translation and dissemination of a model for supporting PC-PH collaboration, including convening focus groups
Findings

Qualitative Interviews:

**Foundational Principles of Collaboration:**
-- mutual trust/respect
-- communication
-- shared vision and values

**Energizing Principles of Collaboration:**
-- sustainability
-- leader innovators
-- defined roles/ responsibilities

Surveys:

PH Working Relationships with PC Practices

- Fairly Consistent Across Clinics: 25%
- Work more closely with some, but same general approach: 31%
- Varies widely among clinics: 44%
Challenges and Opportunities for Dissemination

**Challenges:**
Differences in perspectives and motivators between PC and PH

PH generally reports
- Higher levels of joint work between PC and PH
- More ways of working together
- More reasons for working together

**Opportunities:**
Forthcoming model for integration of PC and PH grounded in current local practice

PC-PH integration is on the radar screen of primary care:

- AAFP Position Paper on Integration of Primary Care and Public Health
- Washington Academy of Family Physicians (WAFP) 2015 Strategic Plan for integration with public health
  - “build organizational structures to foster collaboration”
  - “facilitate meetings (with PH) to develop common goals”
  - “promote member education (in PH)”