



Q&A with Gary Price, MD

President

The Physicians Foundation

Tell us about your work as President of The Physicians Foundation

I have served as President of the Physicians Foundation for the past five years, having been that organization's first chairperson of strategic planning previously. As president, it has been my privilege to lead the Board of Directors in a continuation of impactful investments in the future of our nation's health and the environment in which our physicians care for their patients. We have also begun many new initiatives in our four main focus areas, Physician Leadership, Drivers of Health, Physician Well-Being and the Physicians Perspective on Practice. Some of the more important recent accomplishments of the Physicians Foundation include major support

for the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Heroes Foundation, multiple important national surveys around physician well-being and burnout as well as sponsorship of the "Vital-Signs" campaign and National Physician Suicide Awareness Day. We are proud to have co-sponsored "The National Primary Care Scorecard" with the Milbank Memorial Fund. Our support of research around physician practice has resulted in numerous impactful peer reviewed publications on topics ranging from the consequences of consolidation of health care services to the effects of drivers of health on physician quality scores and reimbursement. With over eighty million dollars invested over twenty-years in grants and programs overall, support for regional and national physician leadership training remains an important part of our efforts. The Physicians Foundation has been a leader for over a decade in addressing the impact of drivers of health on our nation's health and developed the first two quality measures regarding these critical needs adopted by CMS this past year.

What drives you to advocate for physician well being?

I have long been committed to pursuing systemic changes in physician's practice environments to reverse the alarming trends in burnout. Like far too many physicians, I have personally experienced the tragic loss of a colleague to physician suicide. Over thirty-five years of medical practice has deeply



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convinced me that rather than concentrating on making doctors more resilient, our efforts need to be focused on the many factors in contemporary practice leading to frustration and a lack of fulfillment as well as removing the many barriers to physicians seeking appropriate behavioral health care when needed.

What are the most significant challenges facing primary care in today's healthcare landscape?

As noted in "The Health of Primary Care: A Baseline Scorecard Tracking Support for high Quality Primary Care" which the Physicians Foundation supported with the Milbank Memorial Fund, there are a number of challenges facing primary care. That report concluded that the United States is systematically underinvesting in primary care. The physician workforce specializing in primary care appears to be shrinking and gaps in access to care appear to be growing. They found that the percentages of adults reporting that they do not have a usual source of care is increasing. At the same time, that report noted that too few physicians were being trained in community settings where most primary care takes place, and that there was almost no federal funding for primary care research. The authors noted that in the face of the Covid pandemic, a national epidemic of mental health needs, declining life expectancy, dramatic health disparities and other health issues which primary care can address that there was an urgent need for policies which would "increase investment in

high quality primary care, create a robust primary care workforce and enable analysis and learning around primary care".

What key initiatives are The Physicians Foundation undertaking to better support healthcare professionals?

The Physicians Foundation remains committed to empowering physicians in the delivery of high quality care. We remain deeply invested in approaching issues surrounding Drivers of Health and their impact on the cost of health care, health care outcomes, and our health care system. We have recently initiated the "Take 5" campaign to provide practices with actionable steps to assist them in screening for drivers of health needs and reporting that data as part of the MIPS reporting program. We have and will continue to fund state level initiatives in developing new resources for both screening and referring patients for drivers of health needs, as well as funding a yearly physician fellowship centered on drivers of health. The Physicians Foundation currently funds multiple research initiatives and programs centered on physician well-being, and is a founding supporter of the "All-In" campaign to eliminate barriers to physicians and other health care workers to accessing timely behavioral health care. We are in the process of funding a major investment in clinical research around strategies to improve physician satisfaction and well-being at the level of care. We continue to support state



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and county efforts to train physician leaders, and are currently planning a re-imagined national physician leadership program. The physicians foundation has long funded top level research on issues surrounding physician practice, the changing practice environment and the impact of health care policy at the level of care. We continue that effort with a recently renewed collaboration at the Weill Cornell Physicians Foundation Center for Practice and Leadership. Our grantmaking is considered quarterly, as is our progress with our recently renewed strategic plan.

Lastly, how do you see primary care and the wider healthcare ecosystem developing in the next 10 years?

I am very encouraged by the recent inclusion of Drivers of Health quality measures into the federal quality programs. In beginning to measure things that matter, we are already witnessing the development and refinement of resources to screen for and make referrals for these needs. Implicit in these efforts is an acknowledgement of the potential value of investing in the upstream factors which can have a major impact on health and healthcare spending. By identifying the need to include these factors in "Health Care", I see our system at an inflection point. Primary care will play a very important role in guiding our assessment of needs, evaluation and

implementation of solutions and validation of the need for and effectiveness of investments in drivers of health. Primary care will remain the lynchpin of maintaining our nation's health through a team based health management approach focused on preventing chronic disease while promoting optimal health. Coordinating a patient's care will remain an important role for primary care but will include facilitating access to resources for better health, as well as what we traditionally think of as medical or clinical healthcare.

We are delighted to welcome Gary Price, MD. to the speaker faculty for the upcoming Reimagining Primary Care Forum this August!

You can hear more of Dr Price's insights in the Panel Discussion with Open Q&A, titled, 'The Great Burnout - Who's Taking Care of the People Who Take Care of Us?'