Dr. Elizabeth Pfoh was awarded the Excellence in Research Award at the Lerner College of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University for her contributions to understanding the impact of obesity and depression on healthcare utilization. Her research has shown that depression screening can lead to increased identification of depression and linkage to treatment, which can improve patient outcomes. In a different study, she found that obesity and depression are among the top three causes of disability and are major risk factors for other diseases.

In our second story, CVCR celebrated the contributions of advanced practice clinicians (APCs) and physicians in adult care. In comparing care by APCs and physicians, they found that while APCs were almost twice as likely to address an additional concern and 44% more likely to deprescribe an unnecessary medication, they were less likely to discuss an additional concern than physicians. This suggests that care by APCs and physicians produces similar outcomes when considering the number of health-related issues addressed in care, but that care by physicians may be more comprehensive.

The Center for Value Based Care Research (CVCR) seeks to deliver the right care, at the right price, to the right people, at the right time. It aims to improve patient care and reduce costs by focusing on key outcomes, such as morbidity to enable them to live healthier, longer lives. The Center focuses on the following key outcomes: depression, weight management, alcohol use disorder, and substance use disorder. These outcomes are studied through a series of randomized controlled trials and observational studies. They are also associated with metabolic syndrome and increase the risk for other diseases.

The pandemic has increased the visibility of APCs. Prior to the pandemic, APCs were seen as an alternative to physicians, providing care to patients in underserved areas. With the pandemic, APCs have been able to scale up their services, providing care to patients in a variety of settings. This has increased the pressure to make these changes permanent, which has renewed debates around what defines independent practice.

Physicians in an adult population. As the population ages and the number of primary care physicians fails to keep up with demand, there has been a growing influx of advanced practice clinicians (APCs) to provide care. This influx has been driven by the need to adequately meet the demands of increased scope of practice. Independent practice could allow APCs to capture the complexity of decision making, which is hard to appreciate in the fragmented system. APCs could also be required to keep up with demand and meet the needs of patients. However, shortages in frontline providers are a concern.

Does care by APCs and physicians produce similar outcomes? Price for care in primary care is important to patients, but the quality of care is also important. Although prior studies have suggested that care for APS has been similar to that of physicians, a recent study comparing care by APCs and physicians found that while both groups ordered the same number of tests, physicians were almost twice as likely to address an additional concern and 44% more likely to deprescribe an unnecessary medication. However, care by physicians may be more comprehensive. Care by APCs and physicians produces similar outcomes when considering the number of health-related issues addressed in care, but that care by physicians may be more comprehensive.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Center for Value Based Care Research (CVCR) is currently conducting studies related to treating multimorbidity. They are also exploring the role of APCs and physicians in adult care. As the population ages and the number of primary care physicians fails to keep up with demand, there has been a growing influx of advanced practice clinicians (APCs) to provide care. This influx has been driven by the need to adequately meet the demands of increased scope of practice. Independent practice could allow APCs to capture the complexity of decision making, which is hard to appreciate in the fragmented system. APCs could also be required to keep up with demand and meet the needs of patients. However, shortages in frontline providers are a concern.

For more information, visit the CVCR website or call 216-445-4607. Questions or comments? E-mail us at cvcr-info@case.edu.