

# A Look At The Education Of A Family Physician

A Report on Family Medicine in Pennsylvania – Vol. 1, No. 2



PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY  
OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

# Family Medicine

*If you're looking for easy, this isn't for you.*

But if you want to make a difference in people's lives, family medicine just may be the answer.

## Rigorous training, lifelong learning.

Dr. Tim Heilmann (Williamsport) loves being a family physician and thrives on its demands. "Each patient requires different skills, different bits of our knowledge, different kinds of patient interactions, different management skills," he says. "Family medicine is for you if you need a challenge, if you can think on your feet and be creative."

"People think we just take care of colds and sore throats, but we have always taken care of everything—people with severe disease, depression, sprained ankles," says Dr. Katherine Margo (Philadelphia).

Family physicians are prepared to handle just about anything, in many different settings.

Some family physicians choose to serve primarily the elderly, some practice in the local emergency room, some continue to deliver babies. Some work part-time or job share, some join a group practice, some have a solo practice.

Some serve as a sports team physician, some specialize in occupational medicine, some volunteer at free clinics or for international aid organizations.

Some practice in inner cities, some in suburban office complexes, some in rural areas.

Some conduct research, some teach and mentor medical students and residents, some serve in administrative roles. Some see hospital patients, some visit nursing homes, some still make house calls.

That kind of range requires extensive training in medical school and residency and lifelong learning afterward. "In some ways, we have to be better educated than other specialists," Dr. Margo says. "In our training, we make sure that we're high-tech and up-to-date."

Family Medicine is a medical *specialty*. It requires additional years of focused training after four years of medical school. Family physicians learn both wide and deep. In addition to learning about all types of diseases, injuries and illnesses, family physicians are trained in pediatrics and obstetrics. Depending on their own interests and the needs of their community, family physicians may obtain additional training in such areas as geriatrics, emergency medicine, sports medicine, occupational medicine or addictions.

### It doesn't stop there.

Family physicians spend a lifetime learning about the latest and best medical practices through continuing medical education (CME) programs—and most maintain board certification in Family Medicine. CME is required to maintain board certification as well as membership in the American Academy of Family Physicians and its constituent state chapters, including the Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians. And while the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania now requires CME for all licensed physicians, Family Medicine has set the standard high for its members—from the very beginning. ■

## Effective care in a medical home

Family physicians care for men and women, newborn babies to great-grandparents. They treat emergencies and chronic conditions. They help patients stay healthy—physically and emotionally.

More than anything else, family physicians value the

patient-physician relationship. Family Medicine offers a "medical home" for patients.

"I like 'medical home' for its connotation of familiarity, comfort and safety," says Dr. Heilmann. Patients want to—and should—take an active role in their



Other medical specialists say family physicians are the best-suited specialists to deliver preventive care as well as to manage complex patients.



healthcare, but they also want a guide, he says, “someone you trust, a close, ongoing relationship. A personal medical home is a place where you can ask and say things you wouldn’t feel comfortable saying to a stranger.”

### It gets even better.

While family physicians enjoy going to work each day to care for their patients, they are also making a big difference in their communities. Family Medicine offers great benefits to government, insurers and business.

“There are family physicians on many key government committees, in the National Institutes of Health, and in other governmental agencies,” Dr. Margo says. Family physicians are also involved in various capacities with private health insurance plans, Medical Assistance, Medicaid and Medicare.

“Our society has splintered healthcare,” says Dr. Christine Stabler (Lancaster). “You can go to a different doctor for your eye, a tooth, a knee, a toenail,

your skin. People want a place where the sum total of their health and wellness resides, not just a paper or electronic medical record,” she says. “They want a professional whose specialty is *them*, the whole person. That’s the family physician.”

So while family physicians refer patients to other specialists, they also stay in touch with the consulting physicians and therapists to be sure the care is coordinated. Often, the family physician is the one who continues needed treatments and therapies when other specialists are no longer involved.

Other medical specialists value the role of family physicians. They say family physicians are the best-suited specialty to deliver preventive care as well as to manage complex patients. And government, insurers and others look to family physicians for guidance, as well.

“Decision makers heavily use family physicians because we have that ‘big picture’ view,” Dr. Margo says. “We have the view of a person in the context of their family, their intergenerational issues, their issues over time.” ■

## A future that calls for excellence-plus

“To be a family physician in the coming years will require not only an excellence in treating and managing disease,” says University of Pittsburgh medical student Gretchen Dickson. “To be a family physician in the true sense of the term, we must be excellent clinicians as well as compassionate healers, community activists and advocates for both our specialty and patients.”

That sounds like a lot, but family physicians have always been interested in the big picture, even as they pursue their own individual interests.

“We have very divergent members in our profession,” says Dr. Stabler. “What unifies us is the idea that every American should have access to healthcare and that it should be provided by family physicians, which keeps costs down, minimizes duplication of services and provides rapid access to care.”

Medical students say their peers in Family Medicine are people-focused, self-confident, intelligent and idealistic. And they say Family Medicine offers freedom, flexibility and greater personal satisfaction than other medical specialties.

You won’t find family physicians arguing with that.

“It’s constantly interesting, exciting and fun,” says Dr. Margo of Philadelphia. “You never know what you’re going to get when you walk through the door.”

Family medicine is not a job, says Dr. Heilmann. “It’s a *vocation*.” At the end of the day, he says, you have the satisfaction of asking yourself, “How many lives did I touch today?” ■





# Imagine your



## Preparation

The path to proficiency as a family physician begins before college and leads to medical school. Good candidates for Family Medicine:

- Are caring, empathetic, flexible and love new challenges; have a desire to make a difference – an innate drive to ask at the end of each day, “How many lives did I touch in a positive way today?”
- Thrive on interaction with people and understand the importance of forming lifelong partnerships with patients – in effect building a “medical home” for each patient.
- Maintain a strong academic performance in high school and through four years of college. While a concentration of science and math courses is recommended, a range of social sciences classes also is suggested.
- Explore medical schools to identify those that best nurture an interest in primary care careers, such as Family Medicine.
- Are excited by opportunities to engage in population-based research, to work with state-of-the-art diagnostic tools and interconnected technologies for patient care, and to become immersed in the emerging public health infrastructure.

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*“Standing at the threshold of a career in family medicine, I, like many of my student colleagues, am aware of the challenges our specialty is facing. But I am equally aware of the incredible opportunity that Family Medicine presents – the opportunity to spend every day touching lives...”*

— Gretchen Dickson, medical student, University of Pittsburgh



# yourself as a family



## Choosing Family Medicine

Individuals choosing to be family physicians will:

- Find meaning and satisfaction in getting to know patients during clinical clerkships and rotations in medical school.
- Participate in the Family Medicine Interest Group at their medical school for networking and extra-curricular opportunities.
- Join the American Academy of Family Physicians and state chapter, such as the Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians, for opportunities to interact with practicing family physicians and to receive the latest Family Medicine clinical information. Some state chapters, such as the Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians, pay for student memberships and offer student scholarships to attend state and national conferences.
- Select Family Medicine as their specialty in the third or fourth year of medical school.
- Upon completion of medical school, enter a three-year residency program to master both inpatient and outpatient medicine under strict requirements established by the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), which reviews requirements every two to five years.
- Experience the practice of Family Medicine under the guidance of a physician mentor, establishing professional relationships that last throughout a career in medicine.

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*“Family Medicine is for you if you need a challenge, if you can think on your feet and be creative.”*

—Tim Heilmann, MD, Faculty  
Family Practice Residency Program  
The Williamsport Hospital & Medical Center





# physician...



## Getting Started in Practice

One of the best things about Family Medicine is the flexibility that the specialty offers. Family physicians getting started in medical practice:

- Explore options for selecting a professional environment for which they are best suited, whether in a rural location, urban setting or even international opportunities. The AAFP and PAFP offer a variety of career counseling and job searching services for members.
- Make important career decisions, including whether to practice solo, in a group practice or as a member of a hospital medical staff; and what type of patient would best fit the kind of practice they wish to pursue.
- Pass a test administered by the state licensing board to receive a license to practice medicine.
- Become Board Certified by passing a test administered by the American Board of Family Medicine.

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*“A family doctor is there for you throughout your lifetime, through the ups and downs, to help you stay healthy. The emphasis on health, wellness and education is unique to Family Medicine.”*

*—Christine Stabler, MD, Faculty  
Family Practice Residency Program  
Lancaster General Hospital*





## Commitment to Excellence in Healthcare

In their pursuit of excellence in patient care, family physicians spend many hours each year learning about new treatments, procedures, and research. Family physicians sustain professional growth by:

- Earning at least 150 CME credits every three years to maintain national board certification and membership in the American Academy of Family Physicians and its state and local chapters.
- Fulfilling state licensure CME requirements every two years.
- Maintaining their board certification by taking regular self-assessments in core subject areas, conducting practice-based quality improvement projects, and taking a full-day exam every 6 to 7 years. Family Medicine was the first specialty to require recertification.
- Conducting research as part of their practice to help identify and test the effectiveness of advances in medicine.
- Actively participating in their state and national professional associations (such as the AAFP and PAFP) to promote the profession and public health.
- Becoming a teacher or mentor to younger physicians and students.
- Exploring their role as a physician citizen: voting in each election, communicating regularly with elected officials, participating in government public health initiatives, and providing input on laws, regulations and policies that affect the practice of medicine.
- Acquiring practice management experience.

*“Family physicians (are) on many key government committees. Decision makers heavily use family physicians because we have that ‘big picture’ view. We have the view of a person in the context of their family, their intergenerational issues, their issues over time.”*

—Katherine Margo, MD, Faculty  
University of Pennsylvania College of Medicine



## Medical Schools in Pennsylvania

### Drexel University College of Medicine

Program in Family Medicine  
10 Sheurs Lane, Suite 203  
Philadelphia, PA 19127  
215-482-4744  
[www.drexel.edu/med/family\\_medicine](http://www.drexel.edu/med/family_medicine)

### Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Primary Care Medicine  
4190 Rowland Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19131  
215-871-6392  
[www.pcom.edu](http://www.pcom.edu)

### Penn State University College of Medicine

Department of Family & Community Medicine  
Milton S. Hershey Medical Center  
P.O. Box 850  
Hershey, PA 17033  
717-531-8187  
[www.hmc.psu.edu/fcm](http://www.hmc.psu.edu/fcm)

### Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine

Department of Family Medicine  
1858 West Grandview Blvd.  
Erie, PA 16509  
(814) 866-6641  
[www.lecom.edu/lecom-new/lecom](http://www.lecom.edu/lecom-new/lecom)

### Temple University

Department of Family Medicine & Community Health  
3401 North Broad Street  
Jones Hall, Room 821  
Philadelphia, PA 19140  
215-707-4600  
[www.medschool.temple.edu](http://www.medschool.temple.edu)

### Thomas Jefferson University Jefferson Medical College

Department of Family Medicine  
1015 Walnut Street, Suite 401  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
215-955-7272  
[www.jefferson.edu/jmc/](http://www.jefferson.edu/jmc/)

### University of Pennsylvania

Department of Family & Community Medicine  
3400 Spruce Street  
#2 Gates  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-4283  
215-662-3347  
[www.med.upenn.edu/](http://www.med.upenn.edu/)

### University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Department of Family Medicine  
3518 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15261  
412-383-2327  
[www.pitt.edu/~familymd/](http://www.pitt.edu/~familymd/)

## Family Medicine Residency Programs in Pennsylvania

### Abington Family Medicine

500 Old York Road, Suite 108  
Jenkintown, PA 19046  
(215) 481-2729

### Altoona Family Physicians

501 Howard Ave, Suite F2  
Altoona, PA 16601-4818  
(814) 946-2020

### Bryn Mawr Family Medicine Residency Program

1991 Sproul Road, Suite 300  
Broomall, PA 19008-3512  
(610) 645-1566

### Chestnut Hill Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
8815 Germantown Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19118  
(215) 248-8145

### Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center

Family Medicine Residency Program  
1086 Franklin St.  
Johnstown, PA 15905  
(814) 534-9365

### Crozer-Keystone Family Medicine Residency Program

1260 E. Woodland Ave, Suite 200  
Springfield, PA 19064  
(610) 690-4484

### Drexel University College of Medicine Program in Family Medicine

225 Newtown Road  
Warminster, PA 18974-5221  
(215) 441-7560

### Forbes Health System

Forbes Family Medicine Residency Program  
2566 Haymaker Road  
Monroeville, PA 15146  
(412) 858-2768

### Good Samaritan Hospital/ Penn State University

Family Medicine Residency Program  
Good Samaritan Hospital  
P.O. Box 1520  
Lebanon, PA 17042-1520  
(717) 270-1949

### Guthrie Healthcare Family Medicine Residency

Guthrie Square  
Sayre, PA 18840  
(570) 882-3292

### Lancaster General Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
555 North Duke Street  
P.O. Box 3555  
Lancaster, PA 17603-3555  
(717) 290-4940

### Latrobe Area Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
121 W. Second Avenue  
Latrobe, PA 15650  
(724) 537-1485

### Lehigh Valley Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
1730 Chew Street  
Allentown, PA 18105-7017  
(610) 402-4970

### UPMC McKeesport

Family Medicine Residency Program  
2347 Fifth Avenue  
Latterman Health Center  
McKeesport, PA 15132  
(412) 673-5009

### Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh

Family Medicine Residency Program  
1400 Locust Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-5166  
(412) 232-5955

### The Medical Center, Beaver

Family Medicine Residency Program  
918 Third Avenue  
Beaver Falls, PA 15010  
(724) 843-6000 ext. 3017

### Montgomery Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
1330 Powell St., Suite 409  
Norristown, PA 19401-3351  
(610) 277-0964

### Reading Hospital & Medical Center

Family Medicine Residency Program  
Doctors' Office Building, Suite 2120  
301 South Seventh Avenue  
Reading, PA 19611  
(610) 988-8855

### St. Joseph Medical Center

Osteopathic Family Medicine Residency Program  
145 North 6th Street, 2nd Floor  
Reading, PA 19603-0316  
(610) 378-2060

### St. Luke's Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
2830 Easton Ave.  
Bethlehem, PA 18017-4204  
(610) 954-3550

### UPMC St. Margaret

Family Medicine Residency Program  
815 Freeport Rd.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15215-3301  
(412) 784-4227

### Saint Vincent Health Center

Family Medicine Residency Program  
2314 Sassafraas St., Suite 306  
Erie, PA 16502-2720  
(814) 452-5105

### Sacred Heart Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
450 Chew St., Sigal Center  
Allentown, PA 18102-3406  
(610) 776-4976

### UPMC Shadyside

Family Medicine Residency Program  
5230 Centre Ave.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15232-1304  
(412) 623-1254

### Thomas Jefferson University Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
401 Curtis Building, 1015 Walnut St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19107-5005  
(215) 955-2363

### University of Pennsylvania

Family Medicine Residency Program  
51 North 39th Street  
6th Floor, Mutch Building  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
(215) 662-8949  
(215) 243-3290

### Washington Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
95 Leonard Avenue  
Washington, PA 15301  
(724) 223-3548

### Western Pennsylvania Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
4800 Friendship Ave., Suite N221  
Pittsburgh, PA 15224  
(412) 578-1649

### Williamsport Hospital

Family Medicine Residency Program  
699 Rural Avenue  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 321-2340, 1-800-837-2011

### Wyoming Valley

### Family Medicine Residency

2 Sharpe Street  
Kingston, PA 18704  
(570) 552-8963

### York Hospital

### Family Medicine Residency

1001 S. George Street  
York, PA 17403  
(717) 851-3038

## Web Resources

### American Academy of Family Physicians

[www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org)

### The American Board of Family Medicine

[www.theabfm.org](http://www.theabfm.org)

### Future of Family Medicine Project

[www.futurefamilymed.org](http://www.futurefamilymed.org)

### Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians

[www.pafp.com](http://www.pafp.com)

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[www.paahec.org](http://www.paahec.org)



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