

Do you anticipate a shortage of primary care or specialty physicians under health reform?

The expansion of health insurance coverage to millions of new patients will result in a shortage of primary care and specialty physicians. Although we are working with numerous state agencies to project these needs, planning has been clouded by the lack of good health-care work force data. The Affordable Care Act emphasizes preventive care and chronic disease management, so the need for more primary care physicians is especially critical. This comes at a time when fewer medical students are choosing primary care specialties due to declining reimbursement for primary care physicians and high student debt. Graduates of the Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Athens, for example, are carrying an average debt of \$150,000 when they leave medical school. Faced with additional postdoctoral training requirements, many medical students, by necessity, are opting for higher-paying specialties to help pay off loans.

What's being done in education to alleviate this?

The osteopathic profession is one of the fastest growing. Since 2003, six osteopathic schools have opened, with others planned. At the current rate of growth, it's estimated that at least 100,000 osteopathic physicians will be in active medical practice by 2020, compared with 70,000 today. Primary care payment reform, loan repayment programs and other incentives are crucial to encourage students to become primary care physicians.

Can you discuss the possible use of physician extenders such as nurse practitioners?

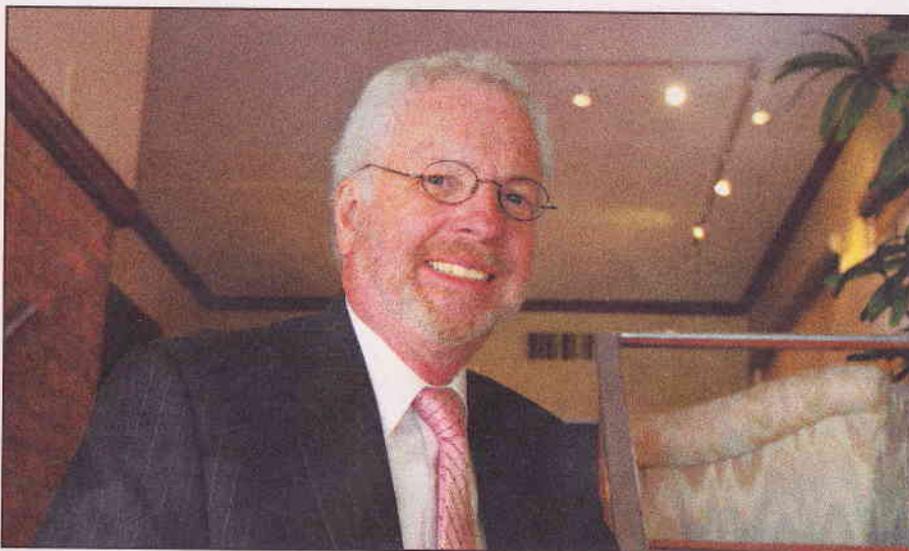
Non-physician clinicians, such as advanced practice nurses and physician assistants, play an important role in the

A CONVERSATION WITH ...

Jon Wills

Executive director | Ohio Osteopathic Association

Jon Wills has been with the Ohio Osteopathic Association since 1975, starting his career there as director of public relations. The group represents approximately 4,619 osteopathic physicians in the state, 11 hospitals that are members of the Ohio Osteopathic Hospital Association and the Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine. Doctors of osteopathic medicine practice a whole-person approach to health care instead of treating only specific symptoms. A native of Columbus, Wills, 62, holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Ohio University.



JANET ADAMS | BUSINESS FIRST

Jon Wills, as leader of the Ohio Osteopathic Association, has joined other physician organizations to advance the patient-centered medical home, which is expected to be a vital piece of health-care reform.

delivery of health care. That's why the American Osteopathic Association joined with the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of

Pediatrics and the American College of Physicians in defining the joint principles of the patient-centered medical home approach to primary care. The medical

home model promotes a physician-led health-care team, which is coordinated across all delivery settings, facilitated by information technology and committed to continuous quality improvement. This team approach ensures that the right care is given by the right provider at the right time to engage patients in staying healthy and playing a central role in their care.

Is there an increased role for allied professions? Should out-of-work factory workers enroll in classes for medical records billing or X-ray tech?

There is a need for more allied health professionals to participate in patient-centered medical homes. The team will need more social workers, behavioral health counselors, nurses and medical assistants to serve the baby boomers who are consuming a greater percentage of health-care services. As far as out-of-work factory workers, the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services projects plenty of openings for skilled workers who are interested in health-care technology and service-related jobs.

What other industries will see a boost as a result of emphasis on coordination and prevention?

The Ohio Osteopathic Association is a founding member of the Ohio Health Information Partnership, which has been charged with helping 6,000 priority primary care providers implement electronic health records in their practices. The partnership also is developing Ohio's first statewide health information exchange to connect patients, hospitals, providers and other health-related agencies with seamless access to health-care records and test results. These ambitious goals are creating a tremendous need for skilled workers to install and maintain equipment and train health-care workers to use new health-care technology meaningfully.