Lon Berkeley: All three of the Joint Commission’s certification options for the Primary Care Medical Home (PCMH) have the following similar features:

- No special application or document submission requirements are needed;
- All evaluate compliance with standards as part of the regular on-site accreditation survey (unless the organization or provider requests a separate off-cycle extension survey);
- Surveyors provide on-site tools, tips, and suggestions to achieve compliance; and,
- Certification remains in effect for up to three years, and is displayed on the Joint Commission’s Quality Check® website at www.QualityCheck.org.

Other specifics were described in the October 2013 issue of Medical Home News (Vol 5, #10), and are also detailed on the Joint Commission’s related websites:

- www.jointcommission.org/accreditation/pchi.aspx-- for accredited ambulatory care organizations;
- www.jointcommission.org/accreditation/primary_care_medical_home_certification_option_for_hospitals.aspx -- for accredited hospitals and critical access hospitals with ambulatory care practices and outpatient services providing services offered by a primary care clinician; and,

While the certification options do differ slightly relative to the applicable standards, scope of the certification award, and the on-site survey process, there are now in total over 4.4 million patients being served during almost 13 million annual visits by over 3000 primary care clinicians at these delivery sites.

**Medical Home News: Is there any difference in the level of interest for your program among safety net clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers versus a practice that serves primarily commercially insured and Medicare patients?**

Lon Berkeley: The Joint Commission has had strong interest from safety net clinics and FQHCs in our PCMH initiative as a result of the Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) having a goal for all FQHCs to become PCMHs, as well as The Joint Commission accrediting almost 300 FQHCs under our HRSA contract, and HRSA providing a “Quality Award” supplemental funding to PCMH-certified health centers. There are numerous third party payors and state Medicaid programs that now accept Joint Commission PCMH/BHH certification. Medium and small-size primary care practices are increasingly expressing interest in pursuing our combined accreditation and PCMH certification approach, with a number already successful throughout the country.

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Medical Home News: Your program recognizes medical homes led by advanced practice nurses but also requires some level of physician participation on the care team. How does this work in practice?

Lon Berkeley: As part of the Joint Commission’s 2014 revisions to our PCMH standards for ambulatory care organizations/practices, the Joint Commission’s expectation is that a physician must always be available to be part of the interdisciplinary team when a physician’s involvement is required to meet the needs of individual patients. The standards changes do not impose any additional restrictions on the scope of practice of nurse practitioners or physician assistants qualified to serve as primary care clinicians, nor do they preempt applicable state law. This clarifying language pertaining to the participation of physicians in team-based care was added as part of the Joint Commission’s July 2014 revisions that also aligned them with Meaningful Use stage 2 expectations. This is further explained on the Joint Commission’s website under our PCMH frequently asked questions section.

Medical Home News: When the program applicants go through your self-assessment tool, is there commonality among the things they really need to work on?

Lon Berkeley: The Joint Commission’s PCMH self-assessment tool has been an extremely helpful resource for identifying gaps in an organization or practice’s operations that need to be addressed both prior to seeking and afterwards in maintaining PCMH certification. In addition, we also make available on our PCMH website a “Top 10” list of PCMH challenging requirements as well. Included on this list are the common standards that need to be addressed:

- Identifying and applying a patient’s health literacy needs to their education;
- Setting and documenting self-management goals in collaboration with patients;
- The interdisciplinary team tracking referrals;
- Collecting and analyzing data pertaining to patients’ satisfaction with the comprehensiveness, coordination, and access to care;
- Providing information about how the PCMH functions; and,
- On a 24/7 basis, providing patients with the ability to obtain same or next day appointments, request prescription renewals, and obtain clinical advice for urgent health needs.

Medical Home News: Are there any plans for programs specific to Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs)?

Lon Berkeley: In keeping with the Joint Commission’s mission to continuously improve health care for the public, a new Integrated Care Certification program is under development that is designed to help improve integration and coordination of patient care across settings with a focus on improving outcomes. Although not specifically designed to evaluate ACOs, the voluntary Integrated Care Certification will review how well an organization is working collaboratively with other settings to improve patient care. Draft standards will soon be available for public comment, with the first phase assessing care integration between at least one Joint Commission-accredited hospital with physician practices/networks, or one Joint Commission-accredited ambulatory health care organization with a hospital.

Medical Home News: Finally, tell us something about yourself that few people would know.

Lon Berkeley: In the spirit of community service and my commitment to health equity, I volunteer as part of a medical mission down in Zacapa, Guatemala, with a wonderful multi-service CBO, Hearts in Motion. Although unfortunately my Spanish isn’t much better, it’s an opportunity to engage with an underserved community to improve their health. The warm gratitude and appreciation of the Guatemalan people is quite rewarding.