



News Release

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Vicenza Army Health Center earns national recognition as Army Medical Home

VICENZA, Italy – The Vicenza Army Health Center has recently been recognized by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) as an Army Patient Centered Medical Home.

PCMH is a team approach to healthcare. In a PCMH, Patients are partnered with a team of healthcare professionals which includes their Primary Care Provider, Registered Nurse, Licensed Practice Nurse and Medic. Together over time, the Patient and their health care team, work to treat illness and injuries, promote healthy living and manage ongoing healthcare issues.

The introduction of the Patient Centered Medical Home applies to all TRICARE Prime (active duty members and their families) served by the Vicenza Health Center, as well as enrolled TRICARE PLUS patients. In addition, other categories of patients who are authorized care in the facility are seen on a space-available basis.

The concept represents a change of primary care access to a patient-centered system for health. Patients in need of an appointment will be seen the same day and this will be accomplished by offering two appointment types: same day for new visits and established appointments for follow-up care. At every visit, patients will see the same health care provider or team.

An important fixture in the PCMH concept includes improved communication between the patient and the medical team and within the team itself. For example, patients may communicate directly with their provider using secure email. To sign up for secure messaging, patients visit the Primary Care clinic and ask to fill out one simple sign-up form. The concept applies both at the Vicenza Health Center on Caserma Ederle as well as at the Soldier Centered Medical Home at Caserma Del Din.

“Achieving this recognition took a lot of work on the part of the PCMH team. Everyone participated in this effort, from the department chiefs to the administrative staff to the medics.” said Sgt. Joseph Gilbert, Vicenza AHC training coordinator. “The scope of the work to be completed consisted mainly of four primary elements: standardization of Standard Operating Procedures, training in the core elements of PCMH, enrollment across the organization and finally, shifting the culture from ‘provider centered’ to ‘patient and team centered’ as measured by a series of standard performance metrics. It took hard work and dedication on the part of the staff who, as with any military institution, experienced frequent and often rapid turnover in key personnel.”

He stated that, as part of the project, each one of six NCOs were assigned one of the six NCQA PCMH Standard elements with the challenge of forming teams of personnel from every section whose work processes were going to be impacted. Parallel to the work being done by these teams, the core team was busy implementing training objectives, modifying performance systems and coordinating outside of the Health Center to capture lessons learned and to facilitate the overall effort.

The extra work it took for the Vicenza AHC to achieve the PCMH certification is evidence of the staff's commitment to the community they serve, said Col. Andrew Barr, Vicenza AHC commander.

“The Patient Centered Medical Home represents the best way to provide healthcare to a community. Patients want to be seen by their personal healthcare team and the healthcare team of providers, nurses, medics, and administrative staff work best when they know their patients,” Barr said. “PCMH is healthcare provided through an evidence-based best practice methodology that supports these goals. USAHC-Vicenza's recent award of NCQA recognition of our PCMH demonstrates our commitment to caring for the Vicenza Military Community and providing the best healthcare possible to our patients. We are proud to serve our community and look forward to providing for the medical needs of our patients through the PCMH model.”

The NCQA is a non-profit organization that measures the ability of medical facilities to provide quality healthcare through standardized, objective measurement guidelines. NCQA requires recognized facilities to enhance access to care and patients' continuity with their provider teams, keep track of patient data to help manage patients' wellbeing, plan and manage care using evidence-based practices, provide self-care support and community resources, as well as track and coordinate tests, referrals and other care for patients. Finally, clinics have to show that they measure their performance and patients' feedback to continue improving the quality of care.

Here's what patients can expect from the Vicenza Army Health Center Medical Home:

- **A personal provider.** Each patient has an ongoing relationship with a personal Physician, Physician Assistant or Nurse Practitioner who is trained to provide first contact, continuous and comprehensive care.
- **Physician directed medical practice.** The personal physician leads a team(s) of individuals at the practice level who collectively take responsibility for ongoing patient care.
- **Improved Communication:** Patients can email their provider via secure messaging.
- **Whole person orientation.** The personal provider is responsible for providing all of the patient's health care needs or for arranging care with other qualified professionals.
- **Coordinated and Integrated Care.** Each patient's care is coordinated and integrated across all elements of the health care system and the patient's community.
- **Quality and Safety focus:** All members of the healthcare team are focused on ensuring high quality care in the medical home.
- **Improved access:** In the PCMH, enhanced access to care options are available through open scheduling, same day appointments, secure messaging, and other innovative options for communication between patients, their personal physician and practice staff.

With the certification of Vicenza Army Health Center and the Baumholder Army Health Clinic, Germany, as Patient Centered Medical Homes, all Europe Regional Medical Command primary care facilities have achieved NCQA recognition and transformed to the Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) model of care. The transition to the PCMH model of care is part of Army Medicine's overall shift from a health care system to a system for health.