

Value of Preventive Medicine

Understanding the Skills and Training Needed for Population Health Practice

Preventive medicine physicians bring a unique mindset to the healthcare system. With training in both clinical medicine and public health, they work in the intersections of our healthcare system – marrying public health ideas to clinical realities and working in clinical practice with population-level perspective.

There is a growing demand for value-based care, and in a [study on the value of preventive medicine](#) recently published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, preventive medicine physicians and healthcare executives identified a need for more physicians well versed in population health.

The [American College of Preventive Medicine](#) is excited to take a leading role in supporting the next generation of physicians trained in population health competencies, dedicated to the care of populations and communities, and ready to complete the transformation of our healthcare system into one that prioritizes prevention.

Currently, many healthcare systems are underequipped to address population-health issues. Per the study, healthcare executives reported population health management was often handled by small groups of one to three physicians at the senior executive level, regularly with no direct-reports. While they influence and support other physician-positions, these other positions have limited time dedicated to population health practices and do not directly report to population health leaders. As health systems seek to provide higher-quality and more efficient care they will need a new cohort of physicians well-versed in population health to assume leadership roles and fill expanded population health staffing needs.

Typical population health activities identified in the study include:

- Tracking quality measures and process improvement
- Patient stratification by risk
- Predictive analytics
- Interfacing with clinicians and the EMR
- Implementing interventions to address social determinants of health.

Population-health physicians, such as those who complete training in preventive medicine, benefit from strong analytic skills and an inclination toward optimizing healthcare populations and systems rather than performing individual patient care. Additionally, there is a need for financial and business acumen, informatics and leadership skills.



Compounding the challenge, healthcare executives identified a need for specific population-health training in medical school, residency or early in a physician's career, as even the most experience clinicians struggle to make the late-career transition to population health roles. The study identified the [Dartmouth Hitchcock Leadership Preventive Medicine Residency](#) as a leader in hospital-based population health management training.

[Read the complete study from the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.](#)