

Medical Guidelines**The Responsibility of a Family Physician****Sajjad Ahmed Malik***Academy of Family Physician Pakistan.***How to cite this:**

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Introduction

Family physicians are personal doctors for people of all ages and health conditions.

They are an integral part of Primary Care System which deals with continuous, comprehensive, coordinated health care provision for a defined population through the shared responsibility and accountability of physicians and all other primary health care providers.

The family physicians vital role is the consistent care provided from the earliest contact incorporating prevention, treatment and rehabilitation from a variety of health care providers, over a continuum of time, in a variety of settings.

They are supposed to be a reliable first contact for health concerns and directly address most health care needs. Family physicians should help patients prevent, understand, and manage illness.

They also need to be good in decision making and care management according to the patient's values and conditions to guide and prioritize care and to protect patients from over-treatment.



Fig 1. Family Physicians

As a member of the community, the family physician should be able to respond to people's changing needs, to adapt quickly to changing circumstances, and to mobilize appropriate resources to address patients' needs.

Family physicians should be skilled at dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty as they see patients with chronic diseases, emotional problems, acute disorders and complex bio-psychosocial problems.

Family physicians should have an understanding and appreciation of the human condition, especially the nature of suffering and patients' response to sickness.

They must be aware of their strengths and limitations and recognize when their own personal issues interfere with effective care.

They should respect the privacy of the person and be faithful to their commitment to patients' well-being, whether or not patients are able to follow through on their commitments

Family physicians should provide continuing care to their patients. They must use repeated contacts with patients to build on the patient-physician relationship.

Over time, the relationship takes on special importance to patients, their families, and the physician.

As a result, the family physician becomes an advocate for the patient.

Family Physician is described as "a director, rather than a doer—a manager rather than a technician,"

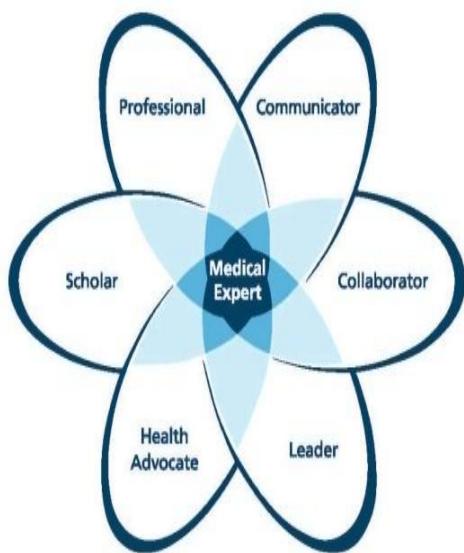


Fig 2. Roles of Family Physician



In general a person in difficulties seeks the help of another person on whom he can rely as a friend—someone with knowledge of what is feasible but also with good judgment on what is desirable in the particular circumstances, and understanding of what the circumstances are.

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Family physicians should have an expert knowledge of the wide range of common problems of patients in the community. They must be equipped with good knowledge of less common, but life threatening and treatable emergencies in patients in all age groups.

Their approach to health care is to be based on the best scientific evidence available. Family physicians should have effective strategies for self-directed, lifelong learning through CME (Continuing Medical Educational) programs.

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The family physician should be responsible for patient panel management, community health, or collaboration with public health.

They should be encouraged to keep proper patient data use it to monitor and manage their patient population, and use best science to prioritize services most likely to benefit health and through enduring partnerships navigate the health system and set health goals.

They should play a leading role and be the ideal leaders of health care systems and partners for public health.” The family physician should view his or her practice as a “population at risk,” and organize the practice to ensure that patients’ health is maintained whether or not they are visiting the clinics.

Such organization is required and should have the ability to evaluate new information and its relevance to the practice, knowledge and skills to assess the effectiveness of care provided by the practice, the appropriate use of medical records and/or other information systems, and the ability to plan and implement policies that will enhance patients’ health.



There is an urgent need to establish a widely endorsed, proper role of the family doctor in Pakistan's rapidly transforming health care delivery system.

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Family physicians should have the responsibility to advocate public policy that promotes their patients' health.