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## Aetna and Aetna Foundation Commit \$750,000 for Studies to Improve Coordination of Health Care

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HARTFORD, Conn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Aetna (NYSE: [AET](#)) and the Aetna Foundation have awarded grants totaling \$750,000 for three separate studies examining the impact on patient health of better communication among health care providers and stronger coordination of health care services. The studies home in on care coordination as a key strategy to improve health outcomes and ultimately lower costs of health care delivery.

Grants of \$250,000 each were directed to Community Health Center, Inc. (CHC), headquartered in Middletown, Conn., to study coordinated care in a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC); Weill Cornell Medical College, based in New York City, to examine the role of visiting nurses in care coordination; and the National Assembly on School-Based Health Care (NASBHC), based in Washington, D.C., to analyze better ways to coordinate care for adolescents who often are treated in a variety of settings, including school-based health centers.

“These three studies, which examine care coordination in different health care settings and among different populations, will provide us with much-needed understanding of coordinated care,” said Gillian Barclay, D.D.S., Dr.P.H., vice president of the Aetna Foundation. “The more precisely we can envision what coordinated care looks like and how best to weave it into the everyday delivery of health care, the closer we can get to an optimal delivery of care that produces the best outcomes at the lowest cost.”

Currently, the United States spends about 18 percent of its gross national product on health care yet ranks 37<sup>th</sup> in the world in the performance of its health care system, according to the World Health Organization. Care coordination is a central component of health care reforms, such as the patient-centered medical home and accountable care organizations.

Care coordination is often defined as a patient-centered, interdisciplinary approach where all of a patient's needs are managed across providers and settings in an integrated, cost-effective manner. A recent study published in the [Annals of Internal Medicine](#) found that primary care providers for Medicare patients typically share patient care for their caseload with 229 other physicians with whom they should coordinate care.

More on the awarded grants follows:

Aetna awarded \$250,000 to [Community Health Center, Inc.](#) to develop and validate a measurement toolkit to evaluate care coordination specifically for primary care practices providing outpatient care for

underserved populations. The toolkit measures will evaluate the effectiveness of care coordination from the perspectives of the patient, the primary care staff and the health care organization. The research team, led by principal investigator Daren Anderson, M.D., vice president and chief quality officer of CHC, will test the care coordination measures at a cross-section of CHC sites. Connecticut's largest network of FQHCs, Community Health Center has primary care sites in 13 communities in the state, as well as school-based clinics and mobile dental units. CHC serves 130,000 patients, nearly all living at or below 200 percent of the poverty level. The results of CHC's two-year study have implications for similar safety-net settings in the United States.

The Aetna Foundation awarded \$250,000 to the [Weill Cornell Medical College](#) for a study to analyze communication between home health nurses and physicians caring for recently hospitalized Medicare patients with congestive heart failure. The study, which is being conducted in collaboration with the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, is being led by Matthew Press, M.D., M.Sc., assistant professor of public health and assistant professor of medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College and by Linda Gerber, Ph.D., professor of public health at Weill Cornell Medical College. Researchers will track in a retrospective cohort how often attempts by home health nurses to communicate with physicians were unsuccessful, assess whether failed attempts were associated with increased risk of hospital readmission, and provide insights into why these failures occur. By potentially revealing a common—and remediable—lapse in the quality of post-hospitalization health care, this study has the potential to make a significant contribution to the national effort to improve care coordination, reduce hospital readmissions, and achieve better interprofessional collaboration.

The Aetna Foundation awarded \$250,000 to the [National Assembly on School-Based Health Care](#) to examine the current state of health care coordination for adolescents, who often receive primary care from multiple providers, including school-based health centers. While most adolescents are healthy, most either have no annual preventative health visit or do not receive the full package of recommended services during their annual physical, such as immunizations, behavior screening or risk-reduction counseling. Researchers will contrast health care for adolescents in five communities, representing various health care delivery settings, racial and ethnic minorities and geographic regions of the United States. Leading the project is NASBHC's President Linda Juszczak, D.N.Sc., M.P.H., M.S., C.P.N.P.

Improving health care through better integrated and coordinated care is one of the Aetna Foundation's three program areas, in addition to fighting the obesity epidemic and promoting racial and health care equity. Over the past 18 months, Aetna and the Aetna Foundation have awarded grants totaling nearly \$2 million for projects in the [United States and the United Kingdom](#) to promote integrated health care and measure the effectiveness of integrated care models.

### **About the Aetna Foundation**

The Aetna Foundation, Inc. is the independent charitable and philanthropic arm of Aetna Inc. Since 1980, Aetna and the Aetna Foundation have contributed \$394 million in grants and sponsorships, including \$15.6 million in 2010. As a national health foundation, we promote wellness, health, and access to high-quality health care for everyone. This work is enhanced by the time and commitment of Aetna employees, who have volunteered more than 2.3 million hours since 2003. Our current giving is focused on addressing the rising rate of adult and childhood obesity in the US; promoting racial and ethnic equity in health and health care; and advancing integrated health care. For more information, visit [www.AetnaFoundation.org](http://www.AetnaFoundation.org).

### **About Aetna**

Aetna is one of the nation's leading diversified health care benefits companies, serving approximately 36.4 million people with information and resources to help them make better informed decisions about their health care. Aetna offers a broad range of traditional, voluntary and consumer-directed health insurance products and related services, including medical, pharmacy, dental, behavioral health, group life and disability plans, medical management capabilities, health care management services for Medicaid plans and health information exchange technology services. Our customers include employer

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