At the American Osteopathic Association, we see the Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) as a revolutionary model of care coordination. Under this model, each patient has an ongoing relationship with a personal physician who leads a team of healthcare providers that takes collective responsibility for patient care. The PCMH will improve primary care physicians’ ability to manage the whole-person care for each patient—a very osteopathic ideal. In addition, we believe it also will improve patients’ overall health by placing them at the forefront of their own health care.

To this end, we have taken a leadership role in promoting widespread PCMH piloting and adoption throughout the country. In 2007, the AOA joined the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians, and American Academy of Family Physicians in developing the Joint Principles of the PCMH, a widely agreed-upon set of core features of medical homes. The unified position of the four organizations, which together represents a majority of primary care physicians in the United States, should strengthen negotiations with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and private payers that are considering implementing demonstration projects aimed at studying the benefits of a PCMH.

In addition, the AOA is a member of the Patient Centered Primary Care Collaborative (PCPCC), and I serve as the Chair of its Board of Directors. The PCPCC is a collaborative of employers, consumer groups and health care stakeholders who work together to advocate for and advance the PCMH model of care.

Our leaders are active in PCMH promotion as well. The AOA Board of Trustees convened a PCMH Summit as part of its Annual Working Retreat in March 2009. In September 2009, Immediate Past President Carlo J. DiMarco, DO, moderated a meeting and discussion of the PCMH concept at the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine. And, AOA Trustee James J. Dearing, DO, is participating in a pilot project administered through UnitedHealthcare to test the effectiveness of the PCMH.

The AOA and members of the osteopathic medical profession will continue our leadership on the PCMH until every patient has access to a home—a true medical home. We can DO it!

By John B. Crosby, JD

“We see the PCMH as a revolutionary model of care coordination.”