

US health care reforms should use new model

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A model of health care developed by a Queen's University doctor should be studied and copied as a way to reform health care in the U.S.

The U.S. is facing a problem of adding 40 million people to its [health care system](#) if President Obama's health care reforms are passed and Ontario's [Family Health Team Model \(FHT\)](#) could help ease the burden.

"What we are saying is that Ontario's FHT model is a very effective and efficient way of providing health care," says Walter Rosser, professor in the Department of Family Medicine. "It should be part of the solution for [health system reform](#) in both Canada and the United States."

The United States has a similar program known as patient-centered medical homes but it's used on a much smaller scale.

Ontario has the largest example of this type of health care model being used in North America, so medical officials everywhere are interested to learn how effective it is on a large scale.

"There are a few patient-centered medical homes developed in the U.S. and some experts are thinking FHTs may become the model that will be used very widely in the U.S.," says Dr. Rosser who is also a doctor at Kingston General Hospital.

Dr. Rosser is one of several pioneers of FHTs, first implemented in 2005. FHTs use experts from various disciplines – such as physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, dietitians, social workers – all working closely

together to take care of people. It also uses an innovative incentive-based funding system that generates higher income for doctors. Preliminary observations suggest patients and doctors are happier. The program, which only operates in Ontario, is now expanding from 170 FHTs today to 200 FHTs in the near future.

Whether the FHT model spreads across the U.S will depend on their government.

"Because our results are still preliminary, government officials want to wait a little longer to see how effective these Ontario FHT models are," says Dr. Rosser.

More information: Dr. Rosser co-authored the recommendation in an article published in the March-April issue of *Annals of Family Medicine*.

Provided by Queen's University

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