

Cooperative Dementia Care Clinics: A New Model for Managing Cognitively Impaired Patients

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Cooperative Health Care Clinics (CHCCs), or shared medical appointments, are a health care innovation that can improve access and expand physicians' capacity to manage common geriatric conditions. Here we describe the development of a new shared medical appointment model for improving management of patients with dementia, a group previously excluded from CHCC models. Three Cooperative Dementia Care Clinics (CDCCs) met monthly for up to one year, drawing participants from a dementia clinic roster of patients and caregivers. Each meeting includes a brief social period, individualized clinical management, and an educational focus on specific problems of patients and caregivers. Thirty three patient-caregiver dyads were offered enrollment in the CDCC program, 26 accepted and 21 enrolled. Five patients withdrew for changes in clinical status, new members were successfully introduced to take their place, and one group ended after reaching a natural termination point. Most participants required several types of clinical intervention and educational support. Patients, family members, clinicians providing group care, and referring primary care physicians expressed high levels of satisfaction with the process. CDCCs can be a viable approach to increasing dementia care capacity in health systems. Formal service intervention trials to evaluate the generalizability, comparative effectiveness and economic viability of this model vs usual care are an appropriate next step.