

Rising role seen for health education specialists

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(HealthDay)—A health education specialist can help family practices implement quality improvement projects with limited additional financial resources, according to an article published in the March/April issue of *Family Practice Management*.

M. Lee Chambliss, M.D., from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and colleagues discuss how the addition of a [health education](#) specialist can help a traditional practice evolve into a team-based model of [patient care](#) critical for meeting the needs of new initiatives focused on quality and population care.

Health education specialists, the authors say, serve several roles, including that of health educator, health coach, and practice quality coordinator. These roles have not been traditionally widespread in the [health care](#) system. While nurses may have performed some of these

roles, they may not be trained in [public health education](#), and given nursing shortages, they may be needed to focus on patient care more than patient education and motivation. In the authors' practice, the health education specialist's work areas include organizing, promoting, and performing the practice's Medicare annual wellness visits; participating in co-visits with a patient and his/her physician; and helping prepare the practice for the National Committee for Quality Assurance's patient-centered medical home recognition, Meaningful Use, and Affordable Care Act requirements.

"Using their practice quality coordination skills, [health education specialists] can prepare and lead the practice into the future of population management and quality improvement," the authors write.

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