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**Jeff Susman, MD**  
Editor-in-Chief

## It takes a village

Sam L was a roofer with an unfortunate penchant for alcohol. The combination turned tragic when he fell off a roof and incurred a traumatic brain injury. From Sam's initial emergency management to the longer term rehabilitation, his care involved multiple providers: physicians, nurses, and pharmacists; occupational, speech, and physical therapists; psychologists, social workers, and substance abuse counselors, all coordinated by a family physician in our patient-centered medical home. Thanks to the collaborative care he received, Sam is sober and back up on roofs, looking healthier than ever before.

But we all know far too many patients who are not as lucky as Sam. Patients whose health care team did not collaborate, and whose outcomes were not maximized, as a result. It is these patients who remind me that it's not just our health care system, but also the way health care professionals are educated, that requires radical retooling.

If we expect health professionals to have shared goals, we need to ensure that they are taught to collaborate and communicate effectively. Despite the challenges of differing accreditation and licensing standards, countless logistic details, and professional pride, we need to reengineer health education—starting now.

Here's what I propose:

- Develop a common *pre*-professional pathway, starting in undergraduate school, to better prepare future health care providers to work collaboratively
- Provide training that emphasizes patient-oriented outcomes and wellness, rather than a sickness model of care
- Require future health care providers to take common courses in subjects that apply across disciplines, such as evidence-based medicine, patient-oriented communication, basic science, and physical assessment skills; integrate public health, population health, and preventive care into the curriculum.

I'm not suggesting that we eliminate professional disciplines, each of which has a rich history and a vital contribution to make. But I do think that physicians need to better understand the conceptual models underlying nursing and social work, say, and the special skills that pharmacists and dentists, among other health professionals, bring to the table.

I imagine a future in which all members of the health care team are prepared to collaborate and communicate for the good of our patients. I imagine a world in which teams like the one that Sam benefitted from are the norm—rather than the exception.

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*Jeff Susman, MD*  
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