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Local practice named as ‘health care innovator’ by Gov. Hickenlooper Juniper Family Medicine accepted into first cohort of State Innovation Model

Denver – June 2018 – Juniper Family Medicine has proven a commitment to improving patient health by participating in the Colorado State Innovation Model (SIM), a federally funded, governor’s office initiative that helps primary care providers integrate physical and behavioral health and succeed in alternative payment models. It is one of 14 practices in Mesa County to participate in SIM and was part of the first cohort that completed its work in March. Data shows that integrated care — or whole-person health — improves patient health.

“SIM providers in these cohorts must focus on the entire patient, which means addressing mind, body and mental wellness,” said Donna Lynne, Lieutenant Governor and Chief Operating Officer, who has many years of experience in the health care sector. “That complete approach to health is what makes the SIM initiative so valuable. Patients get the care they need when they need it and providers learn how to succeed with new payment models. It’s a great example of meaningful reform in our state.”

Patients interviewed by SIM staff notice and appreciate the work done by practices. “It’s powerful for me, as a patient, to land somewhere I feel well taken care of,” said Mary Catherine Conger, a patient at Roaring Fork Family Practice, during a SIM podcast (<https://bit.ly/2nzuieO>).

About 1,847 SIM providers in cohorts 1-2 deliver care during 3,342,018 annual patient visits. SIM will support a total of three practice cohorts and it runs through July 2019.

Colorado was the only state (out of 11 selected for a SIM model test award) to focus on integrated behavioral and physical health care supported by public and private payers as its primary goal. The initiative helps providers progress along an [integrated care path continuum](#) that can start with referrals and could lead to co-location of behavioral and physical health professionals in primary care settings. Integrated care improves patient outcomes, reduces health care costs and enhances provider morale.

The efforts also benefit providers. “It’s energizing to give the kind of care you envision instead of being frustrated every day,” said Gary Knaus, MD, Roaring Fork Family Practice, a SIM cohort-1 practice. “Somewhere in your gut you feel like, ‘God, I could do better.’”

SIM launched with 100 practice sites in 2016, added 155 practices in 2017 and will help about 25% of the state’s primary care sites and four community mental health centers deliver whole-person care.

The state will receive \$65 million from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to implement this model for health care innovation, which is expected to save or avoid \$126.6 million in health care costs for CMS with a 1.95 return on investment during its four-year time frame.

Learn more:

- SIM website: www.colorado.gov/healthinnovation
- Proof that integrated care improves health: www.colorado.gov/healthinnovation/sim-data-hub