

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Expanding Our Impact

When I look back on 2023, I'm sure I will see this as the year when MHQP expanded its impact and influence beyond its historical focus on measuring patient experience and sought ways to apply our expertise and our unique position as a multi-stakeholder collaborative to help strengthen primary care and advance health equity. These efforts culminated in the launch of two major initiatives in 2023 — the Massachusetts Primary Care Dashboard, which MHQP developed with the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA), and *Measured Equity*, a statewide initiative to measure racial and ethnic disparities in patient experiences. This is just the beginning. We look forward to working with our partners and other stakeholders to continue to make meaningful progress toward the goals of improving patient experiences, strengthening primary care, and reducing racial and ethnic disparities. Thank you, as always, for your support.

Barbra G. Rabson, President and CEO

Strengthening Primary Care

In January 2023, CHIA and MHQP released Massachusetts' first-ever dashboard of metrics to monitor the health of primary care in the Commonwealth. This was the culmination of several years of research to identify the best available, reliable and reproducible measures as a factual foundation to help drive policy initiatives and target resources to support primary care across four key dimensions:

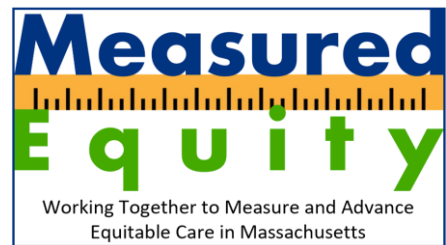
- Finance** – how much are we spending/investing on primary care services?
- Capacity** – do we have the necessary personnel in the current primary care workforce and in the pipeline for longer-term sustainability?
- Performance** – to what extent is primary care serving patients' needs and providing quality care?
- Equity** – to what extent are primary care resources equitably distributed and to what degree do access and utilization disparities exist across racial and ethnic lines?

 <p>FINANCE METRICS FOCUSED ON SPENDING FOR PRIMARY CARE SERVICES</p>	 <p>PERFORMANCE METRICS FOCUSED ON ACCESS AND CARE</p>
 <p>CAPACITY METRICS FOCUSED ON THE PRIMARY CARE WORKFORCE AND PIPELINE</p>	 <p>EQUITY METRICS FOCUSED ON ASSESSING INEQUITIES IN THE SYSTEM</p>

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Advancing Health Equity

Believing that the systemic inequities that plague our healthcare system can only be effectively addressed by working collaboratively across organizational lines, MHQP leveraged its unique position as a multistakeholder collaborative to launch *Measured Equity* in the fall of 2023. This effort is bringing together Massachusetts healthcare leaders to create a comprehensive statewide system for consistently



measuring, understanding, and reducing racial and ethnic disparities in patient experiences, using MHQP's statewide Patient Experience Survey as a platform. It will give MHQP the ability to monitor the progress healthcare systems across the state are making to reduce racial and ethnic disparities.

In collaboration with participating partners, our team revised the statewide survey to capture a range of demographic and social determinants of health data which facilitates the stratification of the data by race (Continued on page 3)

Strengthening Primary Care

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A high-functioning primary care system has been shown to lead to better patient outcomes, lower costs, and more equitable care, and is key to keeping patients well and out of hospitals and emergency departments. Yet, many healthcare leaders have expressed worry about the health and sustainability of primary care in Massachusetts, especially in the wake of the pandemic which caused unprecedented disruptions across all health care settings.

Now the state has a way to monitor the health of this essential resource. By regularly measuring and monitoring these indicators, we can direct bold action to improve the health of primary care, track the effects of investments and other changes to the system, and achieve the high-functioning primary care system we all deserve in Massachusetts.

The metrics compiled in this first release of the dashboard tell a compelling story and highlight gaps in the primary care system due to low investment, diminishing capacity, and racial and ethnic disparities. Key findings include:

- Primary care spending represents less than 8% of overall medical spending and declined across all insurance categories from 2019 to 2020.
- In 2020, Massachusetts had a higher proportion (3.6%) of physicians leaving primary care than the United States overall (3.3%), and these proportions increased from 2018.
- Cancer and other preventive screening rates declined from 2019 to 2020.
- There were substantial racial and ethnic disparities in access to and utilization of primary care.

The next release of the dashboard is planned for early 2024 and will include some new measures and greater granularity and stratifications of existing measures.

Media Coverage About the Health of Primary Care

The release of the Primary Care Dashboard and subsequent activities generated a significant amount of media coverage in Massachusetts, which helped to raise awareness about the state's fragile primary care system:

- **Boston Globe Editorial, February 5:**
"Massachusetts can finally measure the health of primary care"
- **Boston Globe, February 5:**
"Why you can't get in to see your primary care doctor. It's almost frightening."
- **Boston Business Journal, February 25:**
"Primary care is just 8% of total medical spending — and dropping, new report shows"
- **Boston Globe, March 17:**
"Months-long waits accessing care leave patients sicker and in anguish"
- **Boston Globe, June 3:**
"Independent pediatric practices are struggling to survive"



Advancing Health Equity

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and ethnicity and enhances our ability to better understand disparities in care. We are also collaborating with the Cambridge Health Alliance Health Equity Research Lab to determine how best to account for social risk to allow fair comparisons performance across organizations. This will enable participating organizations to compare their data against peer organizations and gain valuable insights to target improvement efforts. We plan to begin incorporating patient experience results stratified by race and ethnicity in our public reporting in 2025.

The organizations that have thus far committed to participate in 2024 are: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Health New England, Mass General Brigham, Mass General Brigham Health Plan, Point32 Health, Reliant Medical Group, Tufts Medicine Integrated Network, UMass Memorial Health, and UniCare. Our goal is to secure the participation of as many payer and provider organizations as possible so that all stakeholders can jointly determine key principles for measuring disparities in patient experience, better understand the drivers of these disparities, and collectively determine how to address them.



Other MHQP Health Equity Initiatives

MHQP is also working to advance health equity in Massachusetts across a range of other initiatives. **In 2023, we:**

- **Convened stakeholders** to develop a research agenda focused on structural-level interventions to address inequities experienced by patients when seeking care for sickle cell pain crises, through a Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Stakeholder Convening Support Award and in partnership with the Massachusetts Sickle Cell Association (MSCA).
- **Conducted a qualitative study** to help us to better understand why Asian patients consistently report lower patient experience scores with primary care than any other racial or ethnic group, through a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation.
- **Continued to enhance our Best Practice Clinical Guidelines** in adult and pediatric preventative care and perinatal care with an emphasis on health equity, working with stakeholders and expert advisors to incorporate new data.
- **Were awarded a PCORI contract**, in partnership with the Endometriosis Association, to convene stakeholders to develop a research agenda to address disparities in endometriosis care for Black women.
- **Partnered with Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC)** on their health care access report about barriers and inequities that Boston residents face when accessing and receiving primary care.
- **Were invited to submit full PCORI convening grant proposal** to develop a research agenda aimed at reducing patient-clinician mistrust within Black communities in partnership with BPHC, ABFM, and Boston Medical Center's MA Community Engagement Alliance.

Capturing Patient Experiences

In May 2023, MHQP announced that we are pleased to have again been selected by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as its vendor to survey members of MassHealth, the state's Medicaid program, about their experiences of care. MHQP completed a five-year contract for this work in 2022. In 2023, MHQP will continue to survey MassHealth members and anticipates fielding surveys from May through August, with results available to EOHHS in the late Fall.

As in prior years, the surveys focus on MassHealth members participating in the Accountable Care Organization (ACO) and Community Partners (CP) programs who receive care and services from providers in three areas: Primary Care, Behavioral Health, and Long-Term Services and Supports. The data collected from these surveys will enable the state to assess its members' experiences as it continues to support MassHealth programs toward integrated, outcomes-based care.

Leadership Changes

MHQP is thrilled to welcome **Julita Mir, MD**, as the new Chair of its Board of Directors. Julita takes over from Jim Roosevelt, Jr., who served laudably in this role for six years.

The focus of Julita's career as an internist, infectious disease specialist and healthcare executive is at the nexus of all that MHQP stands for: optimizing patient experiences, building primary care relationships, and working to achieve equitable care for vulnerable populations. She is formerly Chief Medical Officer of Community Care Cooperative (C3) and began working with MHQP in 2020, serving as the Chair of MHQP's Physician Council for 3 years.



"I am so grateful for Jim Roosevelt's steady leadership and sharp vision over the past six years," says MHQP's President and CEO, Barbra Rabson. "He brought to us his personal passion for health equity and racial justice and leaves us with those values baked into the organization's DNA. And I am equally excited to work with Julita Mir as we continue to redefine what it means to improve care for all patients."

About MHQP

Since 1995, MHQP has been leveraging its unique position as an independent coalition of key stakeholder groups (providers, payers and patients) in Massachusetts healthcare to help provider organizations, health plans and policy makers improve the quality of patient care experiences throughout the state. We do this by gathering useful information from patients and providers, making sense of complex data, and extracting and sharing valuable insights with stakeholders.

MHQP's work is driven by and organized around the principle that the challenges facing healthcare can only be solved through collaboration and innovation across key stakeholder groups — including patients, who we believe are the most underutilized resources in the healthcare system. MHQP is the neutral body that brings these organizations and individuals together to find shared interests and to solve problems that none can solve alone.