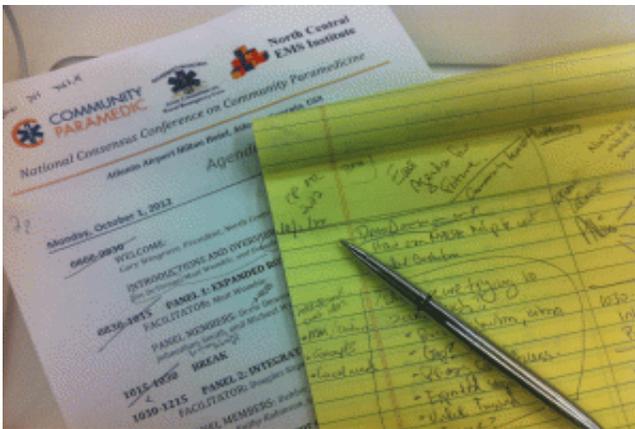




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## Collaboration Will Be Key in Community Paramedic Success



Monday, October 8, 2012  
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In 1996, the National Highway Traffic Administration (NHTSA) EMS division released the EMS Agenda for the Future. The result of a consensus process, the document laid the scaffolding for the future of ambulance services in the U.S. It described a vision of EMS as “community-based health management that is fully integrated with the overall health care system.”(1)

Healthcare has been transforming at a rapid pace. The Affordable Care Act and healthcare reform have altered the status quo—highlighting the gaps in the system and sparking innovation to meet the challenge. The integration of EMS into broader healthcare services was predicted in the 1990s; it’s finally being realized.

On Oct, 1 and 2, a National Consensus Conference on Community Paramedicine was held in Atlanta. Funded with a grant from Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the meeting brought together leaders from across the U.S. who are piloting “community paramedic” programs and stakeholders representing professional associations, regulators, and other agencies engaged in improving quality and access while reducing costs.

The meeting drew together a collaborative group of prehospital healthcare leaders with deep belief in the potential of medics to fill a gap in the healthcare system. Much of the early work has focused on rural settings, but peer urban programs are emerging. Key findings resulting from the meeting include:

1. Diverse pilots are in place, but there isn't consensus in what community paramedic programs are trying to accomplish;
2. Standardization of the scope of service and measurement will benefit progress without stifling local innovation;
3. Regulators continue to follow the pilots programs, and it's critical to ensure clinical practice is in line with paramedic scope of practice;
4. Opportunities to fill the gap may differ in rural and urban environments; and
5. Continued collaboration and sharing will speed progress.

Participants at the meeting universally welcomed the opportunity to network with other leaders on this path. Desire for future avenues for information sharing and cross-learning was voiced. How community health medic programs will evolve is still unclear, but the growing gap in the healthcare system for many patients and the will of EMS leaders to fill the gap is clear. To access materials from the meeting, visit [www.communityparamedic.org/2012NCCCP.aspx](http://www.communityparamedic.org/2012NCCCP.aspx).

## References

1. Michael, J, Bryson, D, McHenry S, et al. (1996). The EMS agenda for the future. In National Highway Transportation Safety Administration. Retrieved from <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/ems/EdAgenda/final/>.

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