ABSTRACT
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Patient Access to Care in Health Reform: Opinions of Primary Care Physicians on St. Maarten, NA, Identifying Barriers and Developing Solutions
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Physician opinions on patient access in health care reform are a valuable contribution to the design, implementation and success of health policy changes. As part of a more broadly defined stakeholder group including patients, providers, policy makers, insurers, and private industry, physicians offer unique perspectives on the health care system and the challenges patients face in accessing care under current policy.

This dissertation examines physician attitudes toward health care reform on St. Maarten, NA using interviews with primary care physicians. Although physicians identified barriers and solutions to health care access that were often specific and actionable, most physicians also saw a need for the development of an overall vision of reform for the health care system. The St. Maarten physicians’ presented barriers and solutions that closely paralleled those of the Pan American Health Organization’s (PAHO) Primary Health Care-Based System approach. For the island nation to succeed in health reform, the PAHO framework provides the necessary vision for a health care system whose primary purpose is to improve the population’s health under difficult circumstances, including St. Maarten’s limited resources and relative geographic isolation.

Leadership in reform is a key element in St. Maarten’s ability to address health reform in an efficient and effective manner. This dissertation research presents a unified voice for physicians as a stakeholder group and an open path to active participation in health reform.