Next Generation Healthcare

While healthcare costs may not be rising quite as rapidly as they were a decade ago, they still represent the largest single expense for many businesses.

Various strategies to reduce healthcare spending have been adopted in response. Some employers look to lessen costs by offering only high-deductible plans, but as cost-sharing increases, employees increasingly forgo care, which is not in the best interests of anyone. Other employers look to the healthcare exchanges set up under the Affordable Care Act to rein in costs by providing a defined contribution and then leaving it up to their employees to purchase benefits on their own. But with enrollment in these exchanges less than half its initial forecast, ensuring quality care remains a high-wire act.

AMITA Health, a joint operating company powered by two of Chicago’s largest health systems — Adventist Midwest Health and Alexian Brothers Health System — is taking a different approach to helping area businesses attack this problem. It is using two major strategies to accomplish what in healthcare is called “Triple Aim” — improving the patient experience of care, improving the health of populations and reducing the per capita cost of healthcare. Strategy #1 is Improving Access & Efficiency and Strategy #2 is Using Data to Reduce Illness & Costs.

As a result, we are changing the healthcare cost equation itself.

Strategy #1: Improving Access & Efficiency

The first key to cutting healthcare costs is improving access. With an expansive and growing footprint, AMITA Health is able to do just that. We provide services across five Chicago-area counties, from the northwest suburbs to the southwest suburbs. Our hospital physician staff is 3,500 strong.

Recently we have brought together AMITA Health physicians with other affiliated physicians to build a single, high-value network of 1,600 physicians, the AMITA Health Clinically Integrated Network (CIN), which extends our reach to be even more convenient to the northwest, west and southwest Chicago suburbs. The CIN engages with all the players in the system — employees, employers, insurance companies or government payers — to focus on quality care. It can partner with 3rd party payers, but also directly with employers to offer cost-effective plans for their employees — particularly those who choose to self-fund their plans.
The Foundation: Clinical Integration
Physicians at AMITA Health approach care from a holistic view that places patients at the center. Our extensive network enables physicians to coordinate care throughout the entire patient journey in ways that were hard to imagine even a few years ago.

Our first foray into clinical integration was the AMITA Health Accountable Care Organization (ACO). An ACO works through a payment and care delivery model that ties reimbursement to quality metrics and reductions in the total cost of care for an assigned population of patients. In 2015, we contributed significant savings to the Medicare ACO program, and the AMITA Health ACO earned an Overall Quality Score of 99.53% — the highest in Illinois and the 6th highest in the country.

From an employers’ perspective, clinical integration means knowing that their employees and their dependents are under a vast “care umbrella.”

The benefit of this is a continuity of knowledge — healthcare professionals within the network have access to each patient’s condition or health status. This “birth to end-of-life” approach is a team-based healthcare delivery model that enables more comprehensive and continuous care that can lead to better health outcomes.

“The way we drive costs down is by knowing our patients well, providing the services they need and helping them manage their health and well-being over the long-term. This can only happen through coordinated care.”

Mark Frey
President & CEO
AMITA Health

Advantages for Employers
There are significant business benefits as well to clinical integration, ones that translate into lower costs, a better bottom line and greater competitiveness for employers.

As large as our physician network is, it is part of a much larger network operated by two of the nation’s largest faith-based health systems — Adventist Health and Ascension Health. This gives us access to clinical intelligence and best practices from approximately 200 hospitals nationwide. Our ability to rapidly leverage data across the system enables us to increase standardization, thus improving safety and quality of care, which lowers cost. Additionally, operating as a single network allows the elimination of redundancies and expenses. The result is an aligned cost structure that can be more affordable to businesses and their employees.

The benefits of integrated care can be summarized in four Cs:

- enhanced Coordination of care
- Collaboration among medical professionals
- Communication among providers
- Convenience for your employees.

Strategy #2: Using Data to Reduce Illness & Costs
Along with our clinically integrated network, AMITA Health’s population health initiatives form a one-two punch against rising healthcare costs. The term “population health” means improving the health of the communities we serve by promoting health and wellness, preventing disease, and addressing health inequities.

We do this by mining population health data and looking at it in different cuts, whether for an employer group, a certain demographic (such as women of childbearing age), or by condition or disease (for example, those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), and making sure we’re applying the appropriate clinical quality focus to that population.

Let’s say one of your employees develops high blood pressure. Without the benefit of being part of a network such as AMITA Health CIN, he might shop around for the best care. The drawback? He is a “blank slate” — the cardiologist he eventually finds doesn’t know his health history, that of his family and other relevant information that may enable a more focused approach to treatment. This is not only inefficient, it is potentially dangerous because there is the possibility of duplicate prescriptions and delivery of unnecessary care.

If the same employee was an AMITA Health patient, his primary care physician could diagnose his condition and provide a referral to a cardiologist within the network. She would perform a workup and develop a plan of care to manage his hypertension. His primary care physician would be looped into that plan too, as would other specialists if needed. If he needed an answer to a question, such as medication dosage clarification, he could email his physician through our portal. He might get diet and nutrition advice from an AMITA Corporate Wellness coach at his workplace.

This type of integration makes for a more complete understanding of the patient across the healthcare continuum. The benefits to your employees are obvious; instead of them bouncing from one provider to another — and attempting to re-educate each — the process is seamless with everyone on the same page throughout the patient journey. The result? Better outcomes for your employees and lower costs for your business.
**Effective Health Management**

In practice, the results of our population health efforts can take many forms. One of them is closing care gaps. We now have the capability to make correlations between a family history of colon cancer, say, with an employee’s gender or age and suggest preemptive screening.

Another example is our use of electronic medical records and a health population tool to aggregate longitudinal data entered by our physicians and nurses to improve care management and protocols. We also have launched an innovative mobile application — AMITA Health — that uses patient-generated health data to monitor more than 100 different health conditions. It’s an innovative, easy way for patients to stay closely connected to their care team after they leave our facilities and keep up with medication doses and other pre- and post-surgical care tasks and reminders. For AMITA Health providers, it’s a way to intervene quickly if they notice symptoms of concern.

While innovation in healthcare is often discussed in terms of new tools and technology like these, it also applies to new ideas. In fact, the emphasis on innovation in healthcare has itself led to an innovation: the AMITA Health Center for Innovation.

**“The AMITA Health Center for Innovation is constantly looking for ways to improve all we do. Patient enabling technologies, patient engagement and patient experience are all at the top of the list.”**  

Patricia Cassidy  
Senior Vice President & Chief Strategy Officer  
AMITA Health

**Employee Wellness Yields Tangible Results**

A second important aspect of population health is employee wellness. Today, employers can pursue strategies that not only strengthen their bottom line but better equip their workers to make informed health decisions. From executive physicals and biometric health risk screenings to cholesterol and blood pressure checks, to providing education and resources around prevention and nutrition, AMITA Health’s Corporate Wellness helps area businesses optimize the health and performance of their workforces.

AMITA Health’s approach to wellness goes beyond just its physical aspects. Mental health disorders often go unrecognized and untreated — not only impacting an individual’s health, but also reducing productivity at work. Effective treatment, on the other hand, can alleviate symptoms for the employee and improve job performance. As a well-respected, top national resource for the treatment of behavioral issues and disorders, the AMITA Health Behavioral Medicine Institute has begun embedding mental health practitioners with our primary care physicians. As a result, mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, panic, substance abuse and alcoholism can be identified and treated early before they become debilitating.

**“If we are successful at population health, we will reduce absenteeism in the workplace, which has great value for employers.”**  

Don Franke  
SVP, Clinical Integration  
CEO, AMITA Health ACO  
CEO, AMITA Health Clinically Integrated Network

**Predictive Analytics in Healthcare**

In the vast amounts of data generated by the healthcare system is something very exciting — opportunity. By discovering associations and understanding patterns and trends within data, predictive analytics has the potential to radically improve care, save lives and lower costs.

Far from a speculative science, the technology is already in use today in a pilot program with AMITA Health, Quant HC and the University of Chicago. eCART uses patient data to risk stratify patients in real time. Research has shown that vital sign abnormalities occur hours before cardiac arrest or another serious complication, which suggests that many of these events could be predicted.

Recently, an eCART analysis at one of our hospitals advised staff to check on an obstetrics patient. The patient said she was fine, and the standard obstetrical monitoring instruments showed nothing out of the ordinary. The AMITA Health team put an oximeter on her finger, a device that indirectly monitors the oxygen saturation of a patient’s blood and changes in blood volume in the skin. The first sign of trouble was that they could not get a reading.

After trying to obtain additional readings and then administering oxygen to the patient (which would normally send oximeter readings much higher), it became clear something was wrong. The patient had a previously undiagnosed heart valve problem that was causing her to go into heart failure. Thanks to predictive analytics, the problem was anticipated and repaired before serious consequences could result and the patient was discharged.

In the future we expect to see the rapid, widespread implementation and use of predictive analytics across AMITA Health as advances in software platforms and tools accelerate.
Save money. Stay healthy.

The choice is clear — but it’s not between saving money for your business and keeping your employees healthy. Rather, it’s the choice to continue reacting to healthcare cost increases — often with half-measures — or understanding them and taking innovative steps today to reduce them. At AMITA Health, we are helping Chicagoland businesses do just that.

Find out more:

Corporate Wellness • Insurance Contracts • Occupational Health
AMITAhealth.org/healthyemployees
1.855.MyAMITA (1.855.692.6482)

AMITA Health Accolades:

3 AMITA Health hospitals ranked “Best in Chicago Area” by U.S. News & World Report: AMITA Health St. Alexius Medical Center Hoffman Estates, AMITA Health Alexian Brothers Medical Center Elk Grove Village, AMITA Health Adventist Medical Center Hinsdale

Top-5 percentile ranking by Consumer Reports for AMITA Health Alexian Brothers Medical Center Elk Grove Village

6 AMITA Health acute-care hospitals earned “A”s in The Leapfrog Group’s biannual Hospital Safety Grade study

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