

February, 2009
Volume 2, Issue 2

COLLABORATION HEALTH CARE

ALIGNING IDEAS WITH COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE HEALTH CARE TODAY



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Opening Our Minds To New Ideas

It's hard to believe that we've been debating the best way to provide health care in our country for well over 100 years. "Compulsory health care" (universal health care) was introduced by Teddy Roosevelt as part of his Progressive Party strategy in the early 1900s. Back then, the system was uncertain how much it wanted the government to be involved with our health care decisions and how health care was delivered. Even though nothing happened then, health care was introduced as a political issue for the first time. (A little tidbit for perspective- we've been talking a long time)

During this time we've talked a lot about different approaches to change the health care delivery system. But, either private interest challenged it, public interest didn't support it, or other items buried it in the list of priorities. We've made incremental changes here and there, but nothing that changes the basic way health care is delivered or changes the direction we were (and are) inevitably heading. So, over 100 years later, we've patched together a system that is confusing, fragmented, expensive, and (for the most part) has been designed around providing "sick care" as opposed to "health care" for our citizens.

This month, we're going to talk about a concept that makes a ton of sense- and could help make a dramatic shift in our way of thinking about health care delivery; integrative medicine and complementary medicine. We've followed the integrative/complementary medicine industry for some time and have always been fascinated with the possibilities with its application- but, the concept has never moved as far along as it should. We think its time to stop the debating and the turf protection that has become part of our current system mind-set, and collaborate together to take some real action with exploring innovations that can make a difference. Integrative medicine is an idea that could make a dramatic influence in changing the focus of health care delivery today. Let's see if we can move it along.

Integrative Medicine- Expanding An Idea

We need to work on changing the focus of our health care system. We've created a complex, fragmented, confusing delivery structure primarily focused on treating illness and disease once a condition already exists. It performs well (although expensive) for those acute conditions and complex procedures that are required to treat illness and disease. But, as we know, we're also loaded with a full portfolio of chronic conditions (obesity, diabetes, hypertension, etc.) making up a significant portion of our costs which are significantly effected by the lifestyles we lead. Our current health care structure has had a tough time relating to this part.

We're beginning to appreciate the importance prevention and lifestyle behaviors play in determining our quality of life and their impact on the costs of health care. Focusing on "prevention/wellness" is the new mantra. Since this is a different way of thinking than in the past, the current system is trying to figure out ways to integrate health and wellness into the existing "sickness-based" model. Successful integration has never been a strong suit of our current system so health and wellness programs are being slapped along-side our existing delivery structures that, in some ways, continues to fragment an already fragmented system.

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Integrative Medicine- Some Background

Definition: "the practice of medicine that reaffirms the importance of the relationship between the practitioner and the patient, focuses on the whole person, is informed by evidence, and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic approaches, health care professionals, and disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing."

What It Includes (Can include- but not limited to. . . .)

Medical Doctors	Nutritional Direction/Counseling
Chiropractic	Herbal Medicine
Naturopathic Physicians	Biofeedback
Acupuncture	Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)
Massage Therapy	

Some Existing Programs (Check them out for specifics)

Penny George Institute for Health and Healing (Minneapolis)
Stanford Center for Integrative Medicine
Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine
Integrative Medicine Service at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center
Duke Center for Integrative Medicine
Center for Integrative Medicine; University of Maryland

% of US Hospitals Offering Complementary Medicine: 8.6% in 1998;
20% in 2004

% of consumers already using some type of complementary therapy:
30%

The concept of expanding integrative medicine will require continued collaboration, discussion, and research. Tracy Gaudet, M.D., director of the Duke Center for Integrative medicine has stated she encounters little resistance once fellow doctors understand that integrative medicine doesn't entail, "blindly advocating for alternative approaches and rejecting conventional ones." Integrative medicine seeks to combine the best of both worlds for the good of the patient. What a perfect opportunity for more collaboration.

We'd love to hear from you. Let us know your thoughts, your feedback, and other ideas.

e-mail us at: info@collaborationhealthcare.com

Integrative Medicine (con't)

So, we pose the questions; "Isn't there a better way to help individuals become engaged in their health, address lifestyle behaviors that contribute to illness and disease (and costs), organizes care more effectively, and uses a broader assortment of interventions beyond the context that exists today i.e. addressing illness? Does the model already exist that can begin to change the focus of our system toward health and prevention but also coordinate care more effectively with the conventional/traditional health care resources when illness and disease exist?"

We think there is a better way, and the general model already exists. We just need to figure out the best way to distribute it more broadly than is being done today.

We've followed the integrative medicine/complementary medicine industry for many years. As with anything, the concept has evolved over time and already made some significant advances and contributions to health care delivery and the health of our population. But, in most cases, the idea (especially the complementary medicine part) remains on the "fringe" of traditional health care delivery due to the established "illness focused" system we have today and because of a lack of general understanding among different audiences regarding what it is in the first place. With some open dialogue and collaboration we believe integrative medicine has an opportunity to play a more important role in the health care system of tomorrow by focusing on health as well as illness (and the costs associated with them) than the one we have today.

The term "Integrative Medicine" was first used in the mid-1990s to describe a different way of coordinating health care delivery for individuals. The concept expanded the perspective of health to include a more holistic approach including the social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health in addition to the physical health of the individual.

The most common definition of integrative medicine is: *"the practice of medicine that reaffirms the importance of the relationship between the practitioner and the patient, focuses on the whole person, is informed by evidence, and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic approaches, health care professionals, and disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing."*

The Penny George Institute for Health and Healing puts it this way, "a patient-centered approach to health care that integrates conventional medicine with the wisdom of other healing traditions".

Integrative medicine (or integrative health care) attempts to break through the silos that have evolved in our system and coordinate access to a broader array of tools and resources available to a patient/consumer for maintaining health, accessing preventive medicine, and addressing specific health conditions when required. In addition to accessing conventional medicine resources, integrative medicine will also access chiropractic, acupuncture, mind-body therapy, massage therapy, and the other complementary medicine resources that have historically been "kept on the sideline" due to the limiting structure of our health care system and the barrier-to-entry walls that have been established (mainly due to misunderstanding, lack of communication, or just plain an unwillingness to accept new approaches).

Integrative medicine programs and centers are being established in numerous hospitals and academic centers across the country. While the outcomes research is not extensive, it is growing (remember a relatively low percentage of medical processes/procedures have been through a RCT). And the evidence is growing regarding the efficacy of specific complementary medicine therapies for

particular conditions i.e. chiropractic for NMS conditions, acupuncture for pain relief.

The largest hospital-based integrative medicine program (Penny George Institute for Health and Healing in Minneapolis) experienced 8,000 outpatient visits and over 14,000 inpatient visits last year. While integrative medicine programs have grown in these specialized settings, the concept of expanding integrative medicine delivery into a more primary care model has some interesting appeal- especially now.

By expanding integrative medicine approaches into a broader delivery (i.e. group practice/solo practitioner) environment several things can happen:

1. Care for the patient/consumer will be coordinated through a single individual focused on a proactive approach to health (prevention/wellness) as well as providing guidance and direction when illness or disease occurs. (Sounds a lot like the Medical Home doesn't it?) The focus of the system can begin to change from sickness care- to health care.
2. Consumers will have access and exposure to a wider variety of (possibly lower cost) alternatives than exists today by including "evidence-informed" complementary medicine therapies to support the health of the individual and coordinate appropriately with conventional medicine when necessary.
3. Consumers will finally begin to become more engaged in their health and knowledgeable of the impact lifestyle behaviors have on their lives- and the costs to the health care system. We'll start to address issues at their core- as opposed to waiting until they become a health care issue. Health care can become a relationship with their provider- instead of a transaction.

But, making this a reality is going to require some action for the stakeholders in our system:

Health plans and payers need to understand and accept the concept and be open to different approaches in benefit design and funding. The providers themselves (both complementary and conventional medicine) need to have their acts together so they can define what they intend to do, how they will evaluate their results, and how they intend to work together on behalf of the patient. And, consumers need to become more knowledgeable and engaged in the system and start taking a more proactive approach to their health.

We aren't suggesting this will be easy. But, we believe the time has come to break the barriers down and talk frankly about the possibilities. The concept makes a lot of sense, and it's a great opportunity for the industry to collaborate together and further expand an idea that already has some traction- especially considering the times we're operating in today.

Something To Think About

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe"
Anatole France

"If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself"
Henry Ford