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COLLABORATION HEALTH CARE

ALIGNING INTEGRATIVE HEALTH CARE AND WELLNESS TO IMPROVE HEALTH CARE TODAY



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We're Tired of The Politics

When we started Collaboration Health Care, Inc. three years ago we began with a passion and vision to see if we could help the health care system innovate and create new ideas to improve health care in this country. We started by creating our own "vision" of what a system would look like if we broke down the many silos of self-interest that exist today. Our 20 Principles of a Collaborative Health Care System has gone through some modifications over the years, but overall, the structure we envisioned back then is even more applicable today.

In March, 2009 our country started the whole "health care reform debate". It started with all the appropriate stakeholders at the table singing Kumbaya together. Everyone agreed that something needed (and needs) to happen to change the trajectory we're on today. The Kumbaya feeling lasted only a short time before things changed. Since then, we've had the Town Halls, "You Lie", Public Option, Death Panels, Pulling the Plug on Grandma, and all of the other memorable events leading us to where we are today. The real emotions of our country come out whenever we talk about health care. Unfortunately, scare-tactics work because most people simply don't understand how it works. Our country has been talking about health care for over 100 years and it's always been this way. But, we really need to do something this time. We simply cannot afford the path we're on.

The health care debate continues to move forward and, quite honestly, we're tired and frustrated with where it's led. We understand that reforming 18% of our economy is a significant deal- but, come on, let's at least focus on the right things and let's do it right for our country. It's time to be honest with each other.

So, this month we decided to put our own (semi-serious) vision of another health care reform scenario out there for you to think about. With less than 30% of the population approving of Congress's performance to-date we figured we couldn't do much worse. - And it's fun to dream sometimes.

A (Semi-Serious) Dream of Collaborative Health Care Reform (CHCR)

The American people are tired of the politics and tired of the direction the health care reform debate is taking. Over 70% of the population knows our health care system is on a crash-course for breaking and needs to be fixed, and (once again) politics and special interests overwhelmed the process. So, the American people have formed a grass-roots movement and taken over health care reform process using a new approach- Collaborative Health Care Reform (CHCR).

The New Reform Structure

The Voice of America Collaboration (VOAC) is our new grass-roots fictitious decision-making body representing the collective voice of the American people. We understand that this should be the role of Congress- but they just don't seem to get it and we don't trust them anyway, so the American citizens are taking control. In our Collaborative Health Care Reform process Congress is moved from the front-end of the decision-making process to the end. Congress is only responsible to enact what has already been decided. No politics, no debate. The American citizens will call the shots. And, honesty and truthfulness rule.

The VOAC is the new trusted focal point and disseminator of all information to the general public from all sides- the good, the bad, and the ugly. The VOAC includes a cross-section of participants representing the voice of the American people- the individual citizens. Government only participates as a stakeholder (with responsibility for 50% of the health care expenses they need to be at the table).

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A key responsibility of the VOAC is to establish and maintain trust with the American people regarding all health care reform discussions and sharing honest information. Politics are replaced by common-sense decisions. As a grass-roots effort, the VOAC organizes the immense responsibility of reforming the structure of America's health care system based on the needs of the people. The VOAC knows this will take some time, but taking the time now is critical to protecting access to health care for future generations. The goal is not just to "bend the cost curve" but to reduce the annual health care expenses in this country while improving the quality of care that is delivered to our citizens. There is more than enough waste and inefficiency in the system today to make this a reasonable goal.

After the Congress is moved to the back of the process, all lobbyists and special interests are eliminated from the Collaborative Health Care Reform process. Collaborative Health Care Reform is all about talking face-to-face and heart-to-heart with all of those involved and representing the needs of the people. We don't rely on who has the most money, needs a legislative favor, or who can scare people the best to get their way. Honesty is a key value of the VOAC, and lobbyists and special interest don't fit in the picture.

All stakeholders in the Collaborative Health Care Reform process (the Stakeholder Collaborator Group) come to the table with the VOAC with an acceptance that everyone is going to have to give something- some will probably give more than others but the Collaborative Health Care Reform process will be fair. This isn't about creating a host of side-deals to protect the interests of the individual stakeholder, but the give-and-take that is necessary to achieve a common goal. Each member of the Stakeholder Collaborator Group (health plans, providers, pharmaceuticals, employers, suppliers) sign a "Commitment to Fairness Statement" emphasizing a commitment to integrity and fairness. The rule of thumb will be that those who have benefited the most from capitalizing on the existing structure will likely have to give back the most. Profit margins and investor expectations will need to be put on the side while all of this gets worked out; but, only for awhile.

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

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Collaborative Health Care Reform (con't)

Health Plans

The VOAC will eliminate all discussion of the public option or co-ops (or whatever else you want to call them) created under the auspices of "increasing competition and keeping health plans honest". We don't have bad-guys in the Collaborative Reform Process (remember, we've got the Commitment to Fairness Statement and no special interest influence). Providers and consumers are dealing with enough without adding another player to the mix and it's too expensive for the government to take on the role. The private market will just have to work better than it has- and the private market needs to quit focusing only on profits and look to the health and welfare of the people they serve. Health plans will need to improve communicating with everyone (providers, consumers, everyone) They will be required to use the same common library of forms for claims, enrollment, and other transactional functions for any interaction with providers or consumers. Yes, they will be required to provide services for those with pre-existing conditions and won't be allowed to terminate coverage unreasonably (no-brainers). Health plans will also be required to set their pricing and payment schedules with providers based upon outcomes and results- as opposed to hitting medical-loss-ratio targets (remember, investor expectations are on a moratorium for now). And, the VOAC will not allow health plans to use any monopoly position to leverage providers, consumers, or employers. If health plans want a free-market, they need to behave more responsibly. Providers will be reimbursed and included in benefit packages based on the value they provide- not by price per unit, or individual biases. The health plans and providers will have to figure out how to make it all work (and they will do it in accordance with the Commitment to Fairness Statement they have signed).

Providers of Care

Providers will also be expected to communicate more effectively throughout the care experience (with each other- and with patients). Improved use of information technology (Electronic Medical Records/Personal Health Records) will be required to eliminate the duplication of tests, paper, lost files, and the huge amount of inefficiencies that exist today. Common technology standards will be established immediately so all provider systems can talk to one another as opposed to putting in systems that are incompatible. And, as already discussed, the VOAC will require the focus of payment and reimbursement to change from fee-for-service (production) to the value (quality) they provide to the individual consumer or patient.

The VOAC will also require all providers to be organized into integrative teams of all appropriate practitioners (not just the ones used in the past) to provide a coordinated and organized care experience for each patient. Providers will be expected to use methods supported by the best evidence and the best science. Ongoing comparative effectiveness research will be an important component of the Collaborative Reform Process. And, yes, the VOAC will address tort reform to eliminate the unnecessary services that are currently delivered to protect the interests of providers delivering care, with a balance of protecting the rights and safety of the American citizen.

Employers

Employers will continue to be the focal point for providing health care coverage and the VOAC will keep the tax-exempt status of benefits in place- for now. However, Employers and Health Plans will be charged with working together to develop methods to improve the portability of health care for individual citizens (the VOAC is tired of linking access to health care to a job). And, employers will be expected to make "health and wellness" a focal point of their health care strategy.

Speaking of Health and Wellness

The VOAC will insist that health, wellness, public health, and quality of life become a central and integral component of America's health care system. All appropriate resources will be strengthened (primary care, complementary care, self-care) to begin to focus America's health care system on quality of life- not just prolonging it.

Individual Consumers

The VOAC will require individual citizens to take a more active role in their health and the health care system. Individual consumers will finally have a trusted resource (the VOAC) to turn to for information and assistance. Through the work of the Stakeholder Collaborator Group the health care experience will be much easier to navigate and information will be much more understandable. The consumer will notice more emphasis on preventive care, health, and wellness as it is now a central part of the health care experience- not a side-bar. The health care system starts to recognize the lifestyle changes taking place in our country as a result of this effort and is much more effective in addressing the chronic conditions that has driven the majority of health care expenses in the past.

The Uninsured

The VOAC recognizes that there will still be a certain population that will continue to "fall through the cracks". But, the VOAC policy on fairness recognizes that these individuals are also part of our "health care system" whether they are inside of the reform discussions or not. The VOAC believes all individuals should have access to quality health care in our country. It will charge the Stakeholder Collaborator Group with developing the methods and funding strategies to bring these individuals into the fold. With all of the money saved as a result of the other initiatives put in place- there is more than enough money to make this happen.

Only Now Can Congress Do Its Thing

Only after all the decisions are made does Congress get back in the picture. All decisions made by the VOAC reflect the desires of the American people. The Commitment to Fairness Statement signed by all participants of the Stakeholder Collaborator Group assures the best and most balanced decisions were made. Yes, everyone had to sacrifice and some had to sacrifice more than others but we knew that was going to happen at the beginning. Now, Congress can draft whatever legislation might be required to make the desires of the Voice of America Collaboration- and the voice of the American people a reality. Town Halls are now an educational experience- not an emotional one.

As we said at the beginning, it's fun to dream sometimes.

Something To Think About

"Every great man is always being helped by everybody; for his gift is to get good out of all things and all persons"

John Rusking

"We are not born with maps; we have to make them, and the making requires effort. . . But many do not want to make this effort. Their maps are small and sketchy, their views of the world narrow and misleading"

M. Scott Peck