



# Clinical connection



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## 2015 Healthcare Trends

The New Year has arrived, so what can we expect for changes in the healthcare landscape? One thing is for certain; change has been rapid and will accelerate this year. So tighten your seatbelt, and let's roll!



### Patient Engagement

More than ever before, it is critical that patients become actively involved in their care. That certainly seems to be a global initiative when one considers what that can entail. Let's explore this topic from the simple to the complex. Organizations are aware of the demographic whom they care for; generally, medical patients encompass the age group of 65 years of age plus. If you remember your Psychology 101 course which covered the stages of growth and development, this generation listens to their physicians and abides by their recommendations. Overall, they are strong and hardy and have lived through World Wars

and some have lived through the Depression. They are not necessarily proficient with current technology or social media, and depend on information in writing and use of the television for material about their conditions. They also want a personal touch; someone who can spend time answering questions or just talking with them.

As an example, think about discharge teaching, when it occurs, how it occurs, and who delivers the information. Everyone knows that discharge teaching begins upon admission (sort of like the Geico commercial, everyone knows that), yet did you know that formal discharge teaching occurs one hour before actual discharge (more of the Geico commercial)? How it occurs...there are many distractions between getting ready to go home, assuring that someone is picking up the patient, papers to sign, and questions to be answered along with the nurse being interrupted. According to a number of research articles, about 10% of information shared is retained. Is it any wonder that some patients are readmitted?



## Patient Engagement *(continued)*

The next opportunity that 2015 will provide is caring for the next generation, the Baby Boomers, whose expectations are totally different. They are familiar with technology and multi-media, however they want what they want when they want it. Planning now for meeting their needs is important. Try focus groups to learn what their expectations are, and what strategies you can use to meet their needs.

Time and time again there is evidence that the five principles of The Caring Model™ will address the expectations of all people and create a caring and healing environment:

1. Spend five minutes at the bedside at the beginning of the shift, and introduce

oneself to the patient/family and explain one's role and the service being provided.

2. Call the patient by his/her preferred name (not honey or sweetie).
3. Use touch appropriately.
4. Sit at eye level to the patient and family.
5. Align the organization's mission and vision with the service being provided. For example, "we believe in providing the best care to our patients, and no request is too big or too small, so don't hesitate to ask." Before leaving the room, ask the patient if there is one thing you can do for them before leaving.

Every organization, regardless of size and scope of services, must assure that patients are involved in their care because ultimately patient satisfaction is affected by level of engagement.

## Value Based Contracts

A number of reports demonstrate that more than 70% of organizations are making a transition into value-based contracts with third party payers. The goal is to reinforce positive patient behaviors, improve physician interaction with patients, and assure efficiencies and quality care delivery in healthcare organizations by motivating all groups to collaborate effectively. Organizations that can demonstrate these improvements will benefit financially through capturing market share and sharing risk effectually.

## Accreditation

Maybe not for everyone, however recent literature citations suggest that more providers and organizations are seeking accreditation outside of their respective State regulatory bodies since the impression is that third party payers in particular view outside accreditors as ensuring the highest level of quality, sometimes called the gold seal of healthcare. Accreditation may also help to gain a higher level of acceptability in the community, increase credibility with potential or current partners, and offer an opportunity to capitalize on a unique marketing differentiation.



## Technology

Continual growth of technology that will streamline work processes, improve performance, and provide valuable data to analyze is exciting. Getting technology to work seamlessly among a variety of providers, hospital departments, and health information exchanges is a key priority in improving efficiencies and eliminating redundancies in healthcare. Other fascinating areas in the technology arena that will likely realize more opportunity includes:

1. Interoperability which focuses on care transitions; disparate systems communicating effectively with each other.
2. Business intelligence encompasses data mining, data warehousing, benchmarking, analytics and reporting to assist leaders in making decisions for the present and the future.
3. Decision support assists in data collection that will help to make the right decisions.
4. Security is becoming tantamount to maintaining an organization's reputation.
5. HIPAA audits will increase. With the recent revisions to the HIPAA Omnibus Rule, it's important to understand what precautions to take to make sure your organization is up to date with all requirements.



## Mergers and Acquisitions

The Pac-Man syndrome will continue; larger organizations will build their empires. The growth of ACOs will continue; 160 new ACOs have been approved by CMS. Small, single physician practices will be bought up by larger entities. It is a time for caution and not running scared. Many larger organizations have discovered that the smaller organizations are unique, and that the leaders of the larger organizations do not know how to operate smaller facilities. Think about affiliations versus acquisition.

## Affordable Care Act

Many pockets throughout the country have seen volume declining for a variety of reasons. At this writing, volumes are up due to influenza, but that boat will sail once the season is over. As a result of increased copays, one could speculate that patients admitted to the hospital will be sicker since the tendency is to wait to go to the hospital because of out-of-pocket costs. In the early to mid-nineties, a number of researchers prophesized that hospital units would become ICUs due to this trend. The prophecy seems to be coming true.

## Partnerships / Retail

In a recent Health Research Institute survey, 58% of consumers said they would be more likely to choose a healthcare company that partnered with other companies to provide better service. An example of this is Walgreens partnering with Theranos to have quick, affordable blood testing available to customers, allowing for faster diagnosis and treatment.

## Improved Economy, Increased Retirements

It is reported that the economy is improving, the stock market is at an all-time high, and therefore timing is right for those who are 60-65 + to retire. That scenario poses mammoth hurdles for healthcare since it is well-known that the average age of nurses throughout the country is 48 and probably closer to 50 in some areas. Physicians are approaching retirement and perhaps waited to see what provider reimbursement was going to be. The prediction is that in 2015, retirements will skyrocket. Are you prepared financially to recruit? Are there replacements for those who retire? Are you having difficulty finding and recruiting physicians now? If so, what are you anticipating over the next 9-12 months? What strategies have you considered if there is a shortage of physicians? Are you using licensed independent practitioners (LIPs)? Are the LIPs practicing to the full extent of their license, and if not, what are your lobbying efforts to encourage your State to pass legislation to support their practice.

## Innovation

Innovation in care delivery models, care transitions, wellness programs, and creating efficiencies in daily operations will be rewarded; the status quo will not be rewarded. Those who are disruptive innovators will succeed while the traditionalists will be the losers.

*"To be successful, innovation is not just about value creation, but value capture."*

*"Every threat to the status quo is an opportunity in disguise."*



*Jay Samit, Disrupt Yourself: Master Personal Transformation, Seize Hidden Opportunities, and Thrive in the Era of Endless Innovation*

*<— click icon for link to website*

## Telehealth

With greater emphasis being placed on affiliations and providing care close to home, it is anticipated that telehealth will continue to burgeon throughout smaller communities. The resulting effect is that treatment can occur quickly, lives will be saved, and those patients who used to be transferred to a tertiary care facility will be managed at the community hospital.

## Finally...

*2015 should be an exciting year in health care with a sea change in patient engagement fostered by increasing availability and use of wireless health monitoring and management tools. This will lead to more involved e-patients who help to manage their own care. It will encourage health care professionals to see the positive benefit to virtual encounters that help keep everyone on track. Hopefully, this will be the year when payers recognize the value of digital communication and agree to reimburse for these technology tools in patient care, as they see results in more efficient care, more effective outcomes and greater economies of scale. The growth and change in the healthcare industry presents a great opportunity to try out new strategies and collaborative relationships. We need to make the most of these opportunities.*

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