

Population Health Forums

Managing Population Health in Low to Moderate Income Medicare Eligibles

Craig Tanio, MD

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The Spring Forum season closed with an interesting and forward-thinking presentation by Craig Tanio, MD, Chief Medical Officer for ChenMed, a company that oversees Chen Neighborhood Medical Centers, serving Florida seniors, and JenCare, a joint venture with Humana, serving other regions within the US. Dr. Tanio specializes in internal medicine, with an emphasis on complex cases, preventive medicine, health care disparities and quality improvement.

Dr. Tanio first addressed the overarching issues affecting his concerns about health care. He explained that primary care and integrated care are major unmet needs in the US and it is very challenging, if not impossible, to make health care affordable without them. As providers look to strengthen their primary care base (i.e. medical home), the majority of organized efforts are in the context of hospital-based systems or larger integrated delivery systems. There is however, a minority of efforts focused on building primary care through bottom-up innovation; these efforts tend to drive more rapid innovation than existing entities.

The ChenMed vision is based on positively changing American health care through primary care innovation for the neediest populations. Inspired by his own life threatening illness, founder Dr. Jenling James Chen, designed the company to meet the needs of seniors by offering quality, well-coordinated care in an accountable and compassionate physician-led culture.

At the core of ChenMed's approach is a business strategy that focuses on: low to moderate income seniors with 5 or more chronic conditions; urban areas with health system competition; HMO Medicare Advantage; and full capitation risk-adjusted capitation through hierarchical condition categories. ChenMed is not trying to optimize around fee-for-service medicine. Along with this focus, Dr. Tanio described a one-stop shopping approach that enhances coordination, collaboration, convenience, and compliance. He further explains that this model essentially resembles an ambulatory ICU and has the capacity to keep patients out of the hospital. Primary care doctors lead the care team and do not have private offices; door-to-door transportation improves patient access to care.

The ChenMed model consists of many other core elements, including a physician culture built on leadership, physician value proposition, and accountability and peer review. Information technology is another core element and Tanio emphasized the importance of using the technology for all stakeholders (i.e. clinicians, patients, pharmacy, care managers), and examining technology beyond the electronic medical records. Other core elements include leveraging effectively in integrated care; understanding the key drivers of success; and bringing in ideas outside of healthcare.

Tanio summarized his presentation by stating that increased investment in primary care on the front end helps to reduce overall costs in the future and improve care. ■

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