

Collaboration is Good for Health Care

A Message from America's Hospitals

Our fragmented health care system is not only confusing — with patients often shuttled among unconnected caregivers — it is also an obstacle to better patient care.

That's not just our opinion: nearly everyone, from the Institute of Medicine to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, has identified fragmentation as one of the main culprits of higher cost, lower quality health care.

When hospitals, doctors, nurses and other caregivers work as a team, patients receive more convenient care with less duplication and fewer adverse prescription drug interactions. By coming together, these same caregivers can avoid duplicating the huge cost of investing in care improvements such as electronic health records.

These and other new technologies will ultimately create a more streamlined continuum of care and healthier outcomes for patients — but they require access to resources that many segments of the health care



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system simply don't have, especially since Medicare and Medicaid consistently underpay providers.

Government and the private sector have created powerful incentives to encourage hospitals and their medical staffs to join together to invest

in technology, meet quality goals and improve care for patients. The resulting strategic alliances of hospitals, physician practices and other pieces of today's health care sector are vigorously policed by two federal and numerous state antitrust agencies. Integrative arrangements that authorities worry are anti-competitive can be examined and, if appropriate, challenged.

This is a new world for all stakeholders: hospitals, physicians, nurses and other caregivers. But most recognize that working together to build a true system of health care is the best way to meet their commitment to provide high-quality patient care, especially in this era of decreasing resources.

Better Collaboration Means Better Health Care

To read more, go to: www.aha.org/collaboration



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