

# What's a Hospital?

## A Message from America's Hospitals

Those blue and white signs with the big H have always carried the promise of help, hope and healing. The hospital of the future will continue to extend that promise, but in new ways that will improve quality while lowering costs. The word hospital will be less about a building and more about a coordinated system of care.



Rich Umbdenstock  
President and CEO  
American Hospital Association

### The Challenge

The environment the hospital of the future faces will be extraordinarily challenging. Providers will have incentives to work more closely together to coordinate care, improve quality and safety, and keep patients healthier.

That's a challenge. Ten thousand Baby Boomers celebrate their 65th birthday each day. More than half of them will have multiple chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes and heart disease, yet they will live and require health care services far longer than previous generations. Chronic conditions are also increasing in younger people.

Medical and information technologies hold out great potential for improved care, but they come with a huge price tag. And even after the expanded insurance coverage emerging from the Affordable Care Act, hospital emergency departments will continue to treat millions of people without health insurance.

Hospitals are taking dramatic action now so they will be ready tomorrow to keep the promise of care to the patients and communities they serve.

That means embracing methods of improving the quality of care while at the same time reining in costs. It means becoming proactive instead of reactive — that is, working to keep people healthy instead of waiting for them to become sick. And hospitals are making tremendous progress.

### Engagement

Hospitals are engaging patients and families, community leaders, physicians and their own staffs in a revolutionary effort to improve well-being, control expenses, improve efficiency and

increase quality and accountability. The goal: Keep people healthy and out of emergency departments; identify and eliminate costly treatments that don't improve patient outcomes; and provide the support patients need to stay out of the hospital once they are discharged. Hospitals will reach out, moving care into their communities in nontraditional ways. Some hospitals are merging to take advantage of economies of scale and provide the latest treatments, reconfiguring to better meet com-

munity needs and provide their patients with access to state-of-the-art equipment without breaking the bank.

### Innovation

Increasingly, hospitals are being paid for the value they provide rather than the volume of patients they treat. Hospitals are responding by using evidence-based practices to, for example, eliminate preventable infections and complications and better manage advanced illness.

These steps can result in lower costs, higher patient satisfaction and outcomes, and fewer unnecessary readmissions. They are using information technology to track the quality of the care they provide. They are also analyzing information so they can spot patterns that could lead to better treatments for certain conditions or groups of patients. All of these efforts are paying off; the growth in hospital spending is at a 15-year low.

These are not simple transitions. But hospitals are determined to do whatever it takes to continue meeting their commitment to their communities.

Just as a Model T and a brand-new hybrid are both cars, the community hospital of the future will still be your hospital. When you follow those blue and white signs, you will find people who work around the clock to provide emergency services, perform surgery and care for patients who are ill or injured. But in the coming years, the image of a hospital will be less about four walls and more about partnerships that advance the health of individuals and communities.

America's hospitals are leading the way

To read more, go to: [www.AHA.org](http://www.AHA.org)



American Hospital  
Association®

PAID FOR BY THE AMERICAN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION