
Healthcare delivery innovation



Innovative models and partnerships are making it possible for healthcare organisations to devise ways to improve healthcare delivery, according to Dr. Jerry Penso, president and CEO of the American Medical Group Association. AMGA comprises of multispeciality medical groups and integrated systems of care; its membership represents 175,000 physicians and legions of allied professionals (e.g., nurses, pharmacists) who treat 1 of every 3 Americans.

To cite an example, Dr. Penso says many AMGA members — including Dignity Health, Intermountain Healthcare, and the Permanente medical groups — are implementing successful community engagement strategies. "These systems are partnering with their communities to address some of the key drivers of poor health, like food insecurity, transportation and substance abuse," he explains.

Recent discussions with some of AMGA members, according to Dr. Penso, have provided insights into what issues will be top of mind with healthcare leaders in 2018. Thus, here's a short list of delivery trends to watch for in the year ahead:

1. Efficiency will become a top priority. As revenues are flat while expenses continue to spike, healthcare leaders must continue to make their practices more efficient. Practices will look for workflow and staffing efficiencies and ways to cut costs that don't impact the patient experience, access or physician burnout. It's a good idea to use nonlicensed, lower-cost caregivers like population health coaches or community health workers. We will also see the expanded use of enabling technology, like texting or e-coaching, which extends the reach of existing, costlier staff, Dr. Penso says.
2. Physician burnout will be a strategic imperative. Addressing physician burnout will become a priority in the boardroom as leaders will demand initiatives to stem this epidemic. Many will add burnout metrics to their dashboards. Concerns about the stability of the critical primary care workforce, early retirements and productivity will drive increased attention to personnel issues including physician frustrations with their EHRs and the lack of adequate leadership training.
3. Competition for convenience will heat up. Expect patients — especially millennials — to continue to drive the demand for quicker, more accessible options to receive care. Growth in urgent care centres, pharmacy-based care, Uber-like home care delivery and virtual medicine will provide increased ways for patients to bypass hospitals and physician offices.
4. Scope-of-practice issues will become more acute. This year, there will be increased demand to let healthcare professionals such as nurses and physician assistants treat patients more autonomously. This will likely lead to resistance from physicians and some medical societies when expanded scope-of-practice encroaches on turf traditionally reserved for physicians.
5. Practices will form more community partnerships. The move to value-based payment systems and the accountability for an attributed population means that healthcare systems will need to work with community partners to address some of the root causes of poor outcomes and resultant higher costs. Look for more partnerships with community-based resources, including diabetes prevention programmes, Uber-like transportation, food banks and drug treatment programmes.

Source: [FierceHealthcare](#)

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Published on : Tue, 9 Jan 2018