

Striking the Right Balance for Better Patient Outcomes

By Paul DeMiglio | August 1, 2013

A recent article in *Health Affairs* reports that ChenMed – which serves low-to-moderate income elderly patients primarily through the Medicare Advantage program – is achieving better health outcomes for Medicare-eligible seniors, including those living with five or more major and chronic health conditions. Dozens of Chen and JenCare Neighborhood Medical Centers are helping tens of thousands of seniors live better, longer:

- Total hospital days per 1,000 patients at ChenMed in 2011 were 1,058 for the Miami area in comparison with 1,712 total US hospital days per 1,000 patients in the same year (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Office of the Actuary).
- Just one year prior, according to *Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care*, the Miami Hospital Referral Region was above the 90th percentile in inpatient hospital days.

Why is ChenMed so successful?

Dr. Christopher Chen, CEO of the organization, says its patient care model integrates cutting-edge medical expertise in a way that empowers physicians to ensure patients receive personalized attention and optimal care.

“People always ask, ‘What is your secret?’ There really is no secret,” he says. “It comes down to having the right incentives, the right physician and staff culture, and the right philosophy of care. My goal at the end of the day is to be cost-effective through improvement of outcomes by changing the philosophy of care. We care about results.”

The group practice’s popularity also attests to its effective one-stop-shop approach to patient-centered care through multi-specialty services. Smaller physician panel sizes of 350-450 patients spur intensive health coaching and preventive care, and prescriptions are given to patients during their visits at all ChenandJenCare Neighborhood Medical Centers.

This aspect of ChenMed's model makes the biggest difference in boosting medication adherence, followed by strong one-on-one doctor-patient relationships that help to change habits for the better. Receiving meds within 3-5 minutes of ordering drugs not only means patients don't have to wait for the treatment they need, but that they receive their medications while having face-to-face interactions with their primary care doctors.

"In our model we aren't looking for high-income patients," Dr. Chen says. "People ask, 'Are you saying that patients like you because you give more attention to them and provide more access to doctors than those who pay for concierge service?' I would say yes."

ChenMed continuously employs top specialists from a variety of fields to conveniently provide fully integrated medical services to patients. It effectively combines services like acupuncture into its portfolio of care, and improves outcomes and patient experience with customized end-to-end technologies enhancing its daily operations. For example, all the medical assistants and staff are equipped with iPads and can offer physician support tailored to each patient. This fuels collaboration, enabling doctors to work side by side with patients and providing a significant convenience to all parties as a result.

Primary care physicians at Chen and JenCare Neighborhood Medical Centers also meet three times a week, engaging in thoughtful ongoing discussions that generate numerous enhancements to care and delivery for better outcomes.

"We discuss whether a hospitalization could be improved through better outpatient care. We ask, 'What can we do to improve patient outcomes while the patient is in the hospital?' We innovate to improve outcomes and can achieve great things for patients because of our small panel sizes. These meetings have saved many lives and continue to do so," explains Dr. Chen.

When interviewing prospective doctors to work at ChenMed, they are asked whether they like spending time with patients and whether they love the complexity of medicine. If they say no to either of those questions, then this group is probably not the best place for them, Dr. Chen says, underscoring that:

"We want you to practice medicine the way you thought you would when you graduated from medical school. It's not about how many patients you see, how many procedures you do, or how much you bill. You should want to be a doctor to make people feel better."

ChenMed, through its Primary Management Resources subsidiary, also provides behind-the-scenes consulting services to enhance medical practice operations nationwide. Physicians interested in end-to-end solutions that streamline operations while enhancing patient health outcomes and the patient experience should contact ChenMed at (305) 628-6117 or go to ChenMed.com.

To read this post on RWHC Blog, [click here](#).