

Issue Brief:

## Engaging Health Care Consumers Through Clinical Health Coaching

### INTRODUCTION

Health care reform is changing the way we deliver healthcare in America. If your organization is one of the innovative pioneering demonstrations in CMS or an accountable care organization, or if you are just beginning the journey to develop medical home capabilities, you know of the shift in emphasis from volume to value. Health care organizations are being called upon to define the populations they serve, to identify those individuals with care management needs, and to engage such individuals with your best intervention strategies.

Whether you represent a clinic, a health care center or a community health organization, the promise of delivering world class care management and care coordination drives change in the care processes of your organization. You work passionately to create and sustain reduced admissions and ER visits—and, to limit avoidable readmissions. In addition, your day-to-day focus is on your patients—reducing the gaps in care and improving their health outcomes, especially for those with chronic conditions.

Effective care processes are absolutely essential for achieving best of class care management and care coordination, and there is something more. Our present system of patient education about both condition management and lifestyle decisions often leaves individuals confused and without the capacity to follow through. In fact, it is the 80-90 percent of health care in America that occurs in the homes of individuals that drive outcomes. That is, our lifestyle behaviors factor prominently in the presence or absence of conditions requiring medical diagnosis and treatment.

The breakthrough opportunity for health care organizations lies in having front-line staff skilled and ready to engage individuals who present themselves for treatment. Beyond the testing protocols and office care management process, practical strategies which routinely activate patients as co-partners in shaping and conducting ongoing self-care and positive health behavior change will distinguish the good from the great health care providers.

The success of your health care organization does not stop as an individual leaves the clinic or health care facility. It continues day after day in the lives of those you serve. Having health care professionals equipped with Clinical Health Coach skills can make a world of difference for your organizations and the lives of those you serve. The Clinical Health Coach is trained to engage, activate and play forward self-management knowledge which demonstrates that the patient may well be the greatest untapped resource in health care.

## IMPROVE CLINICAL OUTCOMES FOR THOSE YOU SERVE

The Clinical Health Coach is trained to utilize proven population health strategies to identify and invite individuals with chronic conditions to the office, the clinic or the healthcare center on a routine basis. This proactive approach to serving individuals is powerful for engaging individuals; and, it is powerful for reducing the burden of chronic conditions which so frequently leads to hospitalizations and ER visits. Nearly 80 percent of the cost of health care is related to chronic conditions. More than 80 percent of that cost comes from hospitalizations and ER visits. One physician office visit costs approximately 1 percent of an inpatient hospitalization. Any reasonable number of added physician office visits become an investment in reducing the cost of health care for the payer, the health plan, and often even the hospital.

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ficacy of utilizing coaching strategies for individuals with chronic conditions—using coaching science in the clinical setting is a path to achieving improved outcomes.

The Clinical Health Coach is trained to transform the conversation between health care professionals and patients, and to transform the care processes that improve patient outcomes and result in positive patient experiences. It is a training organized around evidence-based principles tested in the practicing world of health care with more than 500 graduates.

## ENGAGE AND ACTIVATE YOUR PATIENTS

A recent AHRQ study concluded that 95% of diabetes care in America is self-care. This statistic underscores the need to move from a system of simply educating individuals to involving individuals in their own care. Until individual patients are addressed as the decision-makers in their care and behaviors, it is unlikely they will become activated patients, truly interested in how their actions influence their health.

The Clinical Health Coach facilitates goal setting and the activities to be undertaken after leaving the office or clinic setting, aligning activated patients with your organization's best practice guidelines and partners with them to fulfill active care plans.

The Clinical Health Coach respects and recognizes the individual as the owner of the strategies they will use to maintain a favorable health status or to address health deficits. The Clinical Health Coach uses evidence-based practices to assess the individual's readiness to change and even considers how the individual's communication style affects what they are hearing and understanding.

Most important, the Clinical Health Coach facilitates goal setting and the activities to be undertaken after leaving the office or clinic setting. Traditional teaching techniques can reach some

individuals, but the successful Clinical Health Coach will activate all individuals. The Clinical Health Coach aligns activated patients with your organization's best practice guidelines and partners with them to fulfill active care plans.

## LEAD YOUR MARKET AS A MEDICAL HOME OR A POPULATION HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Achieving recognition as a Patient-Centered Medical Home requires a substantial number of systems to be in place. These include coordinated care and self-management strategies. However, maintaining and improving practice as a medical home over time will depend upon how well these systems

produce superior results for patients, especially those with chronic diseases. Successful self-management strategies rely on engaged patients, and the essence of clinical health coaching addresses ways in which to engage patients.

For example, implementing an electronic health record can enable your practice to become more efficient and support better care, but it cannot produce an engaged patient. It will provide the capacity to address the needs of a panel of patients, whether this is a fee-for-service system, or a panel for whom you are assuming risk. Organizations with the experience and the systems in place to meet the needs of a population of patients or members will be best positioned to form networks or accountable care organizations and practice successfully within them. Combining the Clinical Health Coach with technology, workflow and clarity of team responsibilities will enhance your overall medical home capacity.

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## IMPROVE THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Health care providers have long sought to achieve high satisfaction among patients. Patients are often surveyed and queried as to how well they liked or how high they rated a particular visit, service or consultation. When asked by those providing the service, results reported are often good to excellent.

As health care providers, we will continue to increase focus on measuring a variety of outcomes including clinical, cost, and patient satisfaction. The real test, however, centers on the patient and driving their experience to a level of high value.

However, independent studies paint a somewhat different picture. They have found that: 1) 30 – 50% of patients leave their provider visits without understanding their treatment plan; 2) hospitalized patients retain only 10% of their discharge teaching instructions; and, 3) chronically ill patients receive only 56% of clinically recommended health care.

In the new era of health care, the challenge is to create and foster patient centered care coordination and care management that steps beyond edu-

cation alone. Research has shown that coaching science outperforms traditional teaching for a broad range of behavioral problems and diseases.

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The Clinical Health Coach training, as an interactive learning experience, is specifically designed to emphasize the significant value of the patient experience.

## ACHIEVE FINANCIAL SUCCESS UNDER ANY PAYMENT MODEL

Historically, it has been difficult for practices to implement strategies for unreimbursed services, such as care coordination, medication management, and tracking of patients with chronic conditions. No matter where you are in the continuum of payment models currently, you can be successful financially by implementing the Clinical Health Coach component in your practice/medical home.

Under “fully” or “partially” capitated payment models, or under shared savings arrangements, the benefits of increased management of patients with chronic conditions will produce savings in lowered hospitalizations and decreased complications.

If all or a portion of your business is still in fee-for-service medicine, clinical health coaching acts as a business accelerator for the outpatient practice by producing an increased volume for evidenced based preventative exams and follow-up tests. This increased volume is more than offset in the total cost picture by the decreased utilization of expensive, typically inpatient, services that can be avoided by regular and routine patient management. It does mean that the chronic care patients will be coming to the office more frequently for services and many clinics have already implemented these practices with great success.

The value equation will continue to place emphasis on clinical outcomes. Whatever your market’s pay-for-performance programs look like, the implementation a Clinical Health Coach strategy, and its attendant benefits, in terms of patient activation and engagement, should produce superior results that your payers will value and reward.

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## CONCLUSION

Health care professionals from physicians to dietitians to nurses have been carefully trained to do, teach and tell. Many of these professionals are exceptionally talented in this approach to delivering health care. However, a challenge exists. When we, as health care professionals, see the end of our work being teaching or telling a patient the best steps to care, we may have fallen short of the critical target—behavioral follow-through and change. Non-follow-through by patients is often charged as non-compliant or non-adherent behavior. The truth may center more on the patient not being activated.

The Clinical Health Coach is aware of the value of improved patient outcomes as the intent of health care improvement. These coaches align activated patients with your organization's best practice guidelines. They partner with patients to activate positive health behaviors that support self-management, self-care and the reclaiming of responsibility for one's health. The most important challenge in health care today is activating patients to be drivers of their own health futures. This level of self-direction, self-determination and claimed responsibility guided by the Clinical Health Coach is the essence of real health care reform—the secret sauce for achieving the Triple Aim.

Increasingly, we hear that “the patient is the greatest untapped resource in health care.” The Clinical Health Coach understands the true potential of this idea and is trained as a “behavioral change specialist” to test this promise in the lives of each patient they coach.

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

To learn more about the Iowa Chronic Care Consortium, please visit <http://www.iowacc.com>

To learn more about Clinical Health Coaching programs, please visit <http://www.clinicalhealthcoach.com>

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