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In Oregon, patient-centered care could be model of the future

A team of Oregon policymakers and health care advocates say the state's \$679 million Medicaid shortfall is a wake-up call that has created an opportunity to rethink the way health services are delivered. One change on the horizon might be patient-centered care -- a model for providing comprehensive, coordinated care that is focused on prevention and is designed around the needs of the patient.

Dr. Chuck Hofmann works with primarily elderly patients in a general internal medicine practice he started 30 years ago in Baker County. He also serves on the Oregon Health Policy Board, which works to provide access to quality, affordable health care and improve the health of Oregonians.

By helping people manage chronic issues, Hofmann says, patient-centered care gets better results for lower costs.

(HOFMANN)

WE KNOW THAT THE PART OF THE POPULATION THAT SUFFERS FROM CHRONIC DISEASES, LIKE CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE, DIABETES, ETC., TEND TO CONSUME A LARGE AMOUNT OF HEALTH CARE RESOURCES. THE CONCEPT IS THAT IF YOU MANAGE THOSE CHRONIC DISEASES MORE ACTIVELY, THEN THOSE COSTS GO DOWN.

(more)

Dr. Hofmann says that moving toward patient-centered care has ensured that his patients get more comprehensive care when they need it most -- and reduced expensive emergency room visits.

(HOFMANN)

MY PRACTICE IS A PRACTICE COMPOSED OF ABOUT 3,500 PATIENTS, MOST OF WHOM ARE OVER THE AGE OF 65. AND WE FOUND THAT BY THE TIME THEY CALL FOR AN APPOINTMENT, THEY'RE ALREADY VERY SICK. AND IF WE DON'T GET THEM INTO THE OFFICE RIGHT AWAY, THEY'RE GOING TO END UP IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM AND LIKELY BE ADMITTED TO A HOSPITAL, SO WHAT WE DO IS WE TRY TO GUARANTEE SAME DAY ACCESS IF YOU NEED IT. SO IF SOMEONE CALLS WE TRY TO GET THEM IN THAT SAME DAY. NOW THAT RESULTS IN A COUPLE THINGS: NUMBER ONE, IT GETS THEM HEALTH CARE WHEN THEY NEED IT. AND JUST AS IMPORTANTLY, IT DRAMATICALLY DECREASES THE OVERALL HEALTH CARE COSTS BECAUSE WE'RE TAKING CARE OF THEM AS AN OUTPATIENT WHEN OTHERWISE THEY WOULD BE TAKEN CARE OF AS AN INPATIENT, CONSUMING HUGE AMOUNTS OF RESOURCES.

The goal is to focus on patients with the most serious and chronic conditions to reduce the impact of budget cuts to the Oregon Health Plan. Dr. Hofmann says the state is leading the way with innovations that would lower costs and improve health care for all Oregonians.

(more)

(HOFMANN)

I THINK WHAT OREGON'S DOING THAT'S UNIQUE IN THE COUNTRY IS THAT WE'RE APPROACHING THIS FROM A QUALITY STANDPOINT, NOT A COST SAVINGS STANDPOINT. SO WE'RE NOT JUST SAYING, "HERE'S THE AMOUNT OF MONEY IN THE PIE, GO DISTRIBUTE IT." WHAT WE'RE SAYING IS, "PROVIDE BETTER CARE. WE'LL SAVE MONEY IF YOU DO THAT, AND WE'LL USE THOSE SAVINGS TO HELP CHANGE THE SYSTEM."

Oregon's bi-partisan health system transformation team will present its draft legislation and other recommendations to Governor Kitzhaber and the Legislature next week.

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Editors note: Audio files of Dr. Hoffmann's quotes are available below or at the OHA website:

www.oregon.gov/OHA/news/2011/index.shtml

 [Actualty: Chuck Hofmann pt. 1](#)

 [Actualty: Chuck Hofmann pt. 2](#)

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