

# THE TRIPLE AIM

## MEETING THE GOAL OF HEALTH REFORM

EIGHTH  
IN A SERIES  
THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Health reform is about getting better health outcomes for our communities, improving access and experiences for our patients, and lowering costs. This is the Triple Aim – the goal that OHSU and others who care about the health care system want to achieve.



Achieving the Triple Aim is a lofty goal. First, let's look at cost. By 2020, health care will make up 20 percent of the total cost of goods and services in the United States. That is the highest percentage in the world, and the rate at which health care costs are growing in America is faster than in nearly every other country. Now let's look at outcomes. Despite our high level of spending, the U.S. lags behind on important measures like infant mortality and life expectancy.

We can, and must, do better.

Achieving broad improvements in health outcomes requires redesigning entire systems. Oregon is beginning to transform the way we provide care for Medicaid recipients, through the use of coordinated care organizations (CCOs). The nation is watching. If Oregon is successful, this approach — emphasizing shared decision-making and coordination between providers — could influence reform in a big way. OHSU is helping lead Oregon's transformation, but it means rethinking every aspect of how we deliver care.

# INTEGRATED SYSTEMS



Achieving the Triple Aim requires consistency, standardization and integration across our own organization. In some ways, that goes against the grain of OHSU's culture of entrepreneurialism and independence. But none of us works in isolation. We must find ways to organize complex systems and the work of hundreds of people so that we provide better experiences, better outcomes and lower costs for patients. In just one example, OHSU is streamlining care for the highest risk patients — before they are even

admitted to the hospital. Identifying these patients and managing their care effectively requires a common understanding of the risks they face medically and in their environment. Using the electronic medical record effectively to provide shared understanding of the patient's situation, and ensuring smooth communication between the faculty and staff who serve the patient during hospital stays or outpatient visits is essential. It's work worth doing, but it requires us to retool and rethink old habits.

# EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Health reform isn't just about how OHSU does its work. It's also about how we work with others. Our responsibility for patients will be measured not by the treatments they receive, but by the health outcomes they achieve. Our relationship with patients won't be limited to office visits and hospital stays, but will span a continuum that begins in homes and ends in hospice.

As the state's only comprehensive academic health center, OHSU's role in Oregon's health care system is irreplaceable. But achieving the Triple Aim means having effective relationships with all other parts of the health care system. To accomplish that, OHSU is building links with home health agencies and hospice providers, skilled nursing facilities and primary care clinics, and with healthcare organizations from The

Dalles to Astoria and from Vancouver to Medford. OHSU is also a partner in Health Share of Oregon, a coordinated care organization designed to change the way we provide services to Portland-area Medicaid patients. Health Share of Oregon is all about partnerships; organizations historically seen as competitors are working together to improve the system.

# RAPID CHANGE

OHSU adopted eight essential principles for health care reform in 2008, and has taken part in the conversation leading up to this time of change. The next five years will transform our health care system. The organizations that thrive will be those that excel in managing change.

OHSU is at the leading edge of some of those changes. OHSU has developed

unique expertise in comparing the effectiveness of different treatments and developing standard, evidence-based practices for improving outcomes. As an early adopter of sophisticated systems for managing patients' electronic health records, OHSU is beginning to use this kind of research and other data to achieve better health outcomes and reduce costs. And as the state's leader in

telehealth, OHSU is connecting Oregon's providers in a virtual network that keeps care close to home for patients.

Remaining at the leading edge of reform will require more innovations just like these. Achieving excellence, however, means developing deep skill in matching the potential of innovation to the imperatives of the Triple Aim

**Next up:** *The role of research in health care reform.*

*To see the whole series, search for "The Next Five Years" on the Staff News blog.*