ICP: Meeting the Challenge of Care Coordination

The mission of Integrated Care Partners includes providing seamless care coordination. One of the greatest challenges to achieving this critical aspect of high-quality patient care is a breakdown in communication during the patient-referral process. Integrated Care Partners is making an effort to address this issue to help ensure that patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Beginning at the end of January, six Hartford HealthCare Medical Group primary care offices began sending patient referrals electronically through the par80 e-referral platform. This new software enables improved communication between primary care and specialty care offices. It also drives increased access to care by highlighting care providers who are conveniently located and are available to meet the patient’s needs.

The par80 engagement includes a service that ensures “loop closure.” This means the par80 team will contact every patient who has not received a specialist appointment within 24 hours of his or her generated referral. The team will facilitate the connection between these patients and the receiving physician’s office. By improving access to specialty care, enhancing physician-to-physician communication and adding resources dedicated to obtaining timely appoints for patients, Integrated Care Partners is one step closer to achieving the highest level of care coordination.

Integrated Care Partners Mission

To improve the health of the patients in the communities we serve through a strong physician-led partnership of dedicated health care providers. We will deliver integrated, efficient and effective care based on best practices, seamless care coordination, and measured outcomes to ensure the highest value.

For more information about ICP, please visit our web site at www.integratedcarepartners.org
The Advisory Board, a global research, consulting and technology firm, says three key elements are needed for successful population health management: information-powered clinical decision making based on data – to support proactive, comprehensive care; a primary-care-led clinical workforce to coordinate patient care; and patient engagement and community integration to involve patients in their own care and connect them with the resources they need.

ICP has taken significant steps along the road to managing population health and delivering higher-quality care at lower costs, including improving care coordination (see box on page 1). Our more than 1,200 physician members have committed to a program of financial incentives tied to improving quality and cost through shared savings. Our shared-savings agreements are with commercial insurers, as well as Medicare and our own Hartford HealthCare employees. By providing better access, measuring and managing quality outcomes, and working to reduce unnecessary costs, we move closer to our goal of consistent, high-quality, affordable health care.

How does this work? By having insight from insurance claims and clinical data, physicians gain knowledge about the patients they care for. Providers working as part of a team identify patients who are at risk for adverse events – which always are costly – and take steps to stop them before they occur. By reducing the need for emergency room visits and helping patients avoid hospitalizations, we can have an impact on reducing health care expenses. By providing our patients with assistance in managing their chronic conditions, we can improve the quality of their lives – and those of their families.

As an example, by working with our patients with diabetes, we can utilize clinical diabetes educators and health coaches to ensure we understand and correct issues that can cause barriers to care. We can help ensure that a patient’s follow-up visits with his or her primary care physician or with specialty referrals occur in a timely manner. We can provide resources to help patients manage their complex pharmaceutical needs and improve compliance. All of this leads to better health care for our patients.

There are significant financial impacts to helping patients manage their chronic conditions. About 50 percent of U.S. adults have at least one chronic disease. For patients with dual chronic conditions, the average annual health care cost is about $13,600; for congestive heart failure, $31,900; for chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder, $24,500. Chronic diseases cost more than $1 trillion a year, and a large percentage of the cost is in hospitalizations, many of which are preventable through better disease management. This is where managing population health comes in.

Managing population health is where health care is heading. We’re all in this together. ICP and its members are gearing up to lead the change with the support of analytics, standards of care, quality measures, care coordination and contract negotiation with insurance payers that drive value for both providers and patients. ICP serves as the infrastructure needed to support physicians, patients and the market in this seismic shift in health care – a shift that has to happen for the good of our patients, communities, and, looking at health care costs over the past several years, for our country as a whole.

Do you have questions or comments? Please feel free to contact me at IntegratedCarePartners@hhchealth.org. As always, I look forward to hearing from you. I also welcome your suggestions for future newsletter topics.

Sincerely,
Dr. James Cardon, CEO, Integrated Care Partners & Hartford HealthCare Chief Clinical Integration Officer

Many thanks to Dr. Pat Carroll, ICP Chief Medical Officer, for his input for this article.

Integrated Care Partners (ICP) continues to engage and recruit physicians and forge partnerships with health plans, employers and providers. Our collective goal is to deliver the highest-quality, coordinated patient care and improve the overall health of populations. We continue to seek providers who are equally committed to delivering the best care and interested in the opportunity to participate in the shared-savings deals ICP is negotiating with payers. At no cost to member physicians, ICP also can deliver care-management resources for high-risk patients and the infrastructure needed to achieve quality measures that will allow providers to realize and sustain cost benefits and long-term viability in the currently changing health care market.

ICP News is published the first Monday of every month.