

I am a physician currently working as a hospitalist and administrator at Nanticoke Memorial Hospital. I have been very involved with the transformational work being done through DHCI's Clinical Committee, Sussex County Health Coalition, and eBright ACO, currently working on the health of a population of 45,000+ Medicare beneficiaries.

I certainly agree that the overall cost of healthcare in Delaware is too high, while the quality of that healthcare is not demonstrably high. I think that the arguments for the need for change and the direction for change would be stronger if the data were more recent, instead of largely focusing on the 2004-2014 period. All of the work I referenced above has occurred from 2014-2017, for example.

I do not find the Leapfrog data helpful at all. There are many rating systems in use, and although every one has controversies and detractors, the Leapfrog data is one of the most complex to understand, being a mix of publicly available data and privately obtained data through "voluntary" submission (failure to "voluntarily" submit results in automatically lowered grades). The CMS rating systems for hospitals also has its critics, but I believe it has more widespread acceptance. I have attached information on the latest ratings. These certainly show much that the hospitals can be proud of, but also shows plenty of room for improvement. Finally, I believe the State of Delaware's overall health ranking makes this point of inadequate quality for the cost quite well, without stirring up this unnecessary controversy over flawed rating systems.

Finally, I believe that the Benchmark plan is a reasonable start, but it must be swiftly accomplished with further gains made on building on what has been started over the last three years. As mentioned in the report, I do agree that downside risk with CINs and ACOs should be the major strategy, with adequate quality reporting built on the common scorecard, and with infrastructure support and data analytic availability to accomplish all this. Furthermore, I completely agree that the social determinants of health are indeed responsible for 80% of health, and that attention needs to be paid to this area. I believe that the Healthy Neighborhoods initiatives, which have barely started, show considerable promise in this area, but probably would benefit from greater coordination with the Delaware Health Authority proposed.

Sincerely,

Robert Ferber, MD
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