



January, 2011

Health care is one of the most pressing and talked about issues of our time. Not a day goes by when the topic isn't in the news. The cost and quality of health care, access to it, the overall health of the American population, etc., are all subjects of endless debate and political rancor.

My team and I started this series, *Perspectives*, to help make sense of the rhetoric and share our point of view on what it all means for our local community. We've explored the topic from different angles, from why electronic health records matter to the importance of end-of-life planning. Each letter has generated thoughtful questions and comments from many of you. I've appreciated and enjoyed the dialogue, and I encourage you to keep sharing your thoughts and opinions as the series continues.

Elevating the dialogue

Another way we've tried to elevate the conversation is by bringing leading thinkers in health care to the Seattle area. Through a partnership with Seattle Arts & Lectures (SAL), we've had the privilege of hosting some brilliant writers on the subject, including author and *New Yorker* contributor Atul Gawande, M.D., and *Washington Post* and NPR correspondent T.R. Reid. Both are gifted communicators who challenged us to think in new and different ways about health care. Thank you to everyone who was able to join us for these lectures. We hope you got as much out of it as we did.

We are bringing two more authors to the community this year in conjunction with SAL. Siddhartha Mukherjee, M.D., will present at Town Hall on Jan. 12. His new book "The Emperor of all Maladies: A Biography of Cancer," was named as one of the 10 best books of the year by the *New York Times*. Then on March 2, we have the great honor of hosting Tracy Kidder, author of several books including *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, the story of Paul Farmer's work in Haiti and other forgotten parts of the globe.

The lecture series is one way we chose to commemorate Swedish's 100th anniversary. Rather than throwing parties to celebrate our centennial, we felt we could have more of an impact by creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue around the very complex and nuanced topic of health care.

Our 100th anniversary symposium: how to fix health care through innovation

The capstone of our centennial year was a national symposium on how to fix health care through innovation. The two-day event was held in October and drew 41 distinguished speakers from around the globe, including chairman and CEO of General Electric, Jeffrey Immelt, as well as thought leaders from Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins and Dartmouth to name a few. More than 500 people from the community attended the event, including business and community leaders, health-care providers, health advocates and educators.

We concluded the symposium with 12 specific action items that individual communities could implement to improve health care at the local level. A few of those action items are summarized below and were part of an opinion piece I wrote for the Seattle Times this fall. I thought I'd share those findings with you in this letter as well.

Here are some of the main ideas that emerged from the symposium:

- *Collaborate across a Community:* All health-care is local. Reform can't happen in a silo, it must happen as a collaborative effort, community-by-community. Every town has its unique challenges and opportunities. The health of a population is affected by many different factors. For example, do people in the community have access to grocery stores with fresh produce? If they don't have a car, can they walk to the store safely or take the bus? Without easy access to fresh produce, their only choices may be fast food or processed foods from convenience stores, which are not healthy options. So the solution must unite all the stakeholders in the community from health-care providers and elected officials to schools and businesses.
- *It's not only about the hospital:* It used to be that the hospital was the center of the health-care system, but health-care is changing. Although hospitals will continue to be needed for acute care, the hospital-centric model is not the model for the future. The rise of community clinics and care closer to home, as well as increased use of technology to truly bring medicine into the home will all be increasingly important in the coming years.
- *Focus on Wellness, Prevention & Chronic Disease Management:* There is an opportunity for cost savings by focusing on prevention and wellness before disease onset. Diseases like Type II Diabetes are preventable; we must address the obesity epidemic in our country, especially among children to ensure a healthier future generation. In addition, by focusing on better management of chronic diseases there is tremendous opportunity for cost savings and improved health. Things like improving prescription adherence can go a long way to reducing health care costs and improving the health of the individual.
- *Collaborative, Connected Electronic Health Records:* There is tremendous opportunity for improved health by leveraging existing technology to ensure the entire health-care system is utilizing Electronic Health Records. In addition, there must be a unified system, so that records can be accessed by the patient or a medical professional anywhere in the country. There are many businesses that have developed innovative tools, but as a whole, the industry needs incentives to ensure collaboration to create a robust, national system that works for the benefit of the patient.
- *Make Payment Reform a Priority:* Physicians, hospitals and insurers are paid by volume not value. Today, we "reward" the wrong behavior; we pay based on the number of tests or procedures or appointments, and there is no payment for keeping a patient healthy or away from the office. Payment structures must be reformed to reward for desired health outcomes, i.e. health.

We are in the process of producing a white paper that goes into more detail about these key takeaways. Look for it soon. We also recorded all the presentations and panel discussions at the symposium. I encourage you to watch them when you get a chance. They are available for viewing at www.swedish.org/2010symposium

If you have questions about content from the symposium or would like to learn more about our upcoming Seattle Arts & Lectures events, please contact:

- Dan Dixon, vice president of External Affairs, dan.dixon@swedish.org
- Melissa Tizon, communications director, melissa.tizon@swedish.org

Again, thank you for following our *Perspectives* series. As always, I welcome your thoughts and comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rod Hochman", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rod Hochman, M.D.
CEO, Swedish