

HEALTHCARE REFORM IS COMING WITH OR WITHOUT LEGISLATION

Let's assume for a moment that the healthcare reform bill currently before the United States Congress becomes permanently deadlocked and does not become law. That does not mean the issues raised are going away, nor does it presume that our healthcare institutions, including health plans, healthcare provider organizations, and most important healthcare consumers should forget about the healthcare crisis and merely move on.

As long as healthcare dollars continue to consume such a large percentage of the GDP (now at 18% of GDP likely to grow to 25% in the next few years) the public, various interest groups and those directly working in the healthcare system will continue to discuss, debate, and examine the issues that have been raised. Our political leaders in both parties have brought the need for healthcare reform to our attention. Somehow, they cannot get over themselves, work together and get the job done.

We need healthcare reform in this country and we need it now. The average American citizen cannot continue to assume rising healthcare costs that do not cover a catastrophic event and potentially could leave many bankrupt. Furthermore, we have a moral and ethical obligation to cover the uninsured and we owe it to ourselves financially to give them basic preventive care so that their health issues do not precipitate into complex conditions that land them in the ER which raises costs for everyone and benefits no one.

Healthcare reform is not a Democrat or a Republican issue. It is an American issue. There are so many ways that payers, providers, and consumers can impact the finances of the healthcare system, starting with the implementation of digital health records, e-prescribing and evidenced-based medicine, so that repeat and excess tests are avoided; medications are not prescribed and paid for only to be tossed because they do not work; and patients are not shuffled from one procedure to another or from one provider to another to find a cure. The time to reform healthcare payment and practice is now and we cannot let the stalemate in Washington rule the way the system moves ahead.