

Hartford Courant

Opinion: Where is the patient in CT's health care system?

It's time for Connecticut's patients to take the wheel

By **JOHN M. RODIS** and **CHRISTOPHER DADLEZ**

PUBLISHED: March 19, 2024 at 5:15 a.m. | UPDATED: March 19, 2024 at 5:16 a.m.

It's all about the patient.

Ask any physician what's most important to them and you'll hear that it's the health and well-being of their patients. Yet look at Connecticut's healthcare headlines and the top stories are about mergers and [acquisitions of healthcare systems](#).

Increasingly, [independent physician practices](#) are disappearing, giving way to networks owned by hospital systems, private equity investors and even insurance companies, and the abundant advertisements by rival healthcare systems are inescapable.

Like most of the country, healthcare in Connecticut is fragmented, not well-organized and far too transactional and it seems very prudent to ask: Where is the patient in all of this?

We believe they should be in the driver's seat.

As people who have run a hospital and a healthcare system, respectively, we believe it's time to place the value of a patient's health outcomes over the venue where care is provided; time to re-center the focus of care on preventing injury and disease instead of fixing it; time to break away from the "fee-for-service" model and focus on the quality of care provided.

This is called value-based care, and by tying the amount that healthcare providers earn to the results they deliver for their patients, it shifts the present-day transactional healthcare delivery model to one based on the actual health improvement experienced by patients.

Patients should be active participants in the decision-making process related to their care, and given better information about their conditions, treatment options and potential outcomes. With value-based care, physicians are empowered to partner with their patients to provide the right care at the right time for the right reasons, mapping healthcare pathways designed for their needs. Not only does value-based care enhance communication between patients and their providers, it also frees multiple providers to coordinate their care for the same patient.

Value-based healthcare organizations free physicians and patients to take advantage of the tools and resources to ease their navigation through the healthcare system, from care plans that are clear road maps for treatment that track and measure results to patient portals that allow patients to view their care plans and medical records, communicate with providers, refill prescriptions and access educational resources. They also feature patient advocates who help

individuals understand their rights and options and online communities that provide peer support, advice, education and empowerment.

Think of it this way: patients and their employers have borne the brunt of the rapid rise in healthcare costs, co-pays, deductibles, co-insurance and premium payments. In a value-based healthcare model, the emphasis is on disease prevention, optimal medical or surgical treatment in the most cost-effective way and venue, and the avoidance of high-cost treatments, tests and procedures that have little to no benefit.

Connecticut need look no further for a proven value-based care success story than [Southern New England Healthcare Organization](#). SoNE HEALTH, as it is called, is a local physician-owned, fully integrated clinical network of healthcare providers with proven results in optimizing the quality of patient care. For more than 20 years, SoNE HEALTH's physician-forward ownership model has empowered physicians to deliver care, innovate, focus on patient care and optimize the management of their health.

By prioritizing the quality and healthcare outcomes, value-based healthcare organizations like SoNE HEALTH take a proactive approach to managing employee health risks, improving healthcare quality for patients and preventing problems before they begin, improving the management of chronic conditions, reducing hospitalizations and spending for high-cost services and venues and boosting the health, well-being and productivity of Connecticut's workforce.

In addition to patient outcomes, value-based care delivers impressive financial outcomes, saving millions of dollars for health plans, reducing unnecessary emergency room visits, inpatient admissions and patient out-of-pocket costs beyond industry benchmarks.

It's time for Connecticut's patients to take the wheel when it comes to finding innovative, integrated, collaborative care networks that connect all the dots. The result will be enhanced quality care, open communication, cost savings and satisfaction. This can only be found in a system that values the quality of outcomes delivered over the restrictive and transactional-based delivery structures that just can't deliver the care Connecticut deserves.

John M. Rodis, MD, MBA, FACHE is the founder and president of Arista Health, LLC, a healthcare consulting company, and the former president of Saint Francis Hospital. Christopher Dadlez, FACHE is the president and CEO of Infinity Oncology Solutions and the former president and CEO of Trinity Health Of New England.