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Overview

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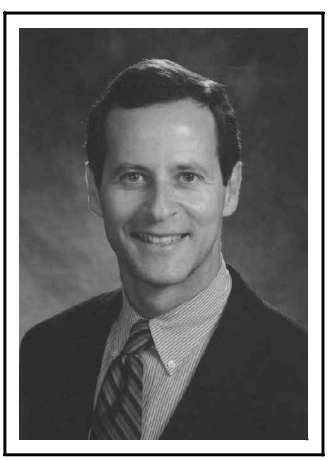
Overview

DAVID B. NASH, M.D., M.B.A.



Dr. Nash *is The Dr. Raymond C. and Doris N. Grandon Professor of Health Policy and Medicine at Thomas Jefferson Medical College. He is internationally recognized for his work in outcomes management, medical staff development, and quality-of-care improvement, and his publications have appeared in major journals and a dozen edited books. As one of the most influential policy makers in academic medicine, he serves with key national groups focusing on quality measurement and improvement, and functions as a consultant to many organizations in both the public and private sectors.*

FOR THREE DAYS THIS PAST MAY, McKesson Corporation provided a venue for stakeholders from different areas of healthcare—providers, payers, policy makers, regulators—to discuss the current and future state of healthcare in America. The McKesson Executive Summit for Payors had it all: thought-provoking commentary, an open exchange of ideas and perspectives, and the opportunity to discuss wide-ranging healthcare issues with thought leaders in the industry.

A Fortune 20 Company, McKesson Corporation is the world's largest supply management and healthcare information technology company, providing supply solutions and information solutions across the spectrum of the healthcare industry—from market-leading businesses in pharmaceutical and medical-surgical distribution to information technology and outsourcing services for healthcare providers and payors. McKesson's diverse customer base includes over 200,000 physicians, 5,000 hospitals, 10,000 long-term care sites, 3,000 pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical-surgical manufacturers, and 600 healthcare payors.

Among the thought-provoking presentations and panel discussions summarized in this supplement are:

- PacifiCare's innovative approaches to disease management programs and quality initiatives
- Healthcare experts' opinions on the optimum means for achieving consumer-focused health care
- Employers' perspectives on the key issues of healthcare cost control and the value of lost days
- An expert Pharmacy Panel's take on three compelling business issues
- An insightful analysis of the health of U.S. healthcare

The opening keynote speaker, Michael Tchong, energized us with his vision of the future. A professional trend-watcher, Mr. Tchong foresaw genomics and the Internet revolutionizing healthcare. But for enduring success, he looked to foundation issues such as preventive/alternative health solutions, centralized medical data, patient–provider communication, education, and the government's leadership role.

Chairman, Department of Health Policy, Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Dr. Sam Ho provided a behind-the-scenes look at PacifiCare Health System's (PHS) forward-thinking disease management programs and quality initiatives. He reviewed the company's process for analyzing disease management opportunities, making the determination of buy versus build, and balancing social versus financial return on investment. Dr. Ho also presented an overview of PacifiCare's consumer-directed provider evaluations that enable consumers to evaluate and compare providers on the basis of quality and cost.

A Healthcare Panel accepted the challenge of assessing how healthcare must change in order to survive. Three diverse panelists offered their unique perspectives on how to reach what was revealed to be a common goal: the critical importance of achieving a customer focus. Targeted, appropriate consumer education and decision support are key.

Dave Walters, of American Greetings Corporation, and Dr. Bill Yang, of The Coca-Cola Company, presented two different but effective approaches to the healthcare dilemma facing employers. Mr. Walters recounted American Greetings' experience in dealing with double-digit healthcare inflation in a flat economy. Dr. Yang described The Coca-Cola Company's initiative for employees with chronic conditions: helping them make the decision to come to work, and finding creative solutions to keep them productive at work until the end of the workday.

An expert Pharmacy Panel addressed three aspects of the pharmacy business: the managed care perspective on specialty pharmaceuticals, carrier-based pharmacy benefits management, and one employer's analysis of the cost/benefits of re-importation of pharmaceuticals.

Susan Miller detailed Humana's web-based health insurance "solutions." In launching on-line products that enable consumers to assess their risk tolerances and make informed choices from a cafeteria of options, the company promotes its philosophy of providing members with tools to confidently take control of their own healthcare decisions.

Dr. Peter Salgo entertained and educated us with his closing keynote presentation, providing an update on SARS—its pathogenesis, the prospect of a cure, and the implications for public health policies. He expounded on the discovery of a pathogen now suspected of being the root cause of heart attack, and left us confident of the prospect of eliminating the country's number one fatal disease within the next five years. He closed with an intriguing question: As we discover how to control or eradicate the most life-threatening diseases, how do we continue to cover, care, and pay for living longer?

As you review the highlights of the conference, I'm sure that you will be inspired to initiate similar discussions with your colleagues and to become an active partner in the continuing evolution of healthcare.

Healthcare Influences Today and Tomorrow

MICHAEL TCHONG

Mr. Tchong *is founder of a variety of trend-setting media properties, including MacWEEK, ICONOCAST, and Trendsetters.com, each of which delivers provocative and insightful analyses of news and trends affecting technology, marketing, and business. His years of experience in advertising, publishing, and software development afford him a unique perspective on the broad-ranging effects of technology on a variety of industries, including healthcare.*

Genomics and the Internet are revolutionizing healthcare. But what are the other ingredients necessary for its enduring success? The following article, abstracted from Mr. Tchong's keynote presentation, offers some interesting answers.

CEO, ICONOCAST, Inc.