Chronic Care at the Crossroads

Jefferson's Department of Health Policy is developing a major article, "**Chronic Care at the Crossroads: Preparing to meet the challenge of an aging population**," highlighting the key messages from this important and timely summit. Look for it in November, 2007 when it will be published as a special supplement to the December issue of *Disease Management*. The webcast may be viewed on-line at http://www.visualwebcaster.com/event.asp?id=40457.

On July 17, 2007 in Washington, DC, a group of the nation's most respected health leaders gathered to discuss and explore solutions to a highly complex and increasingly urgent challenge for the US healthcare system – namely, the looming burden of chronic care for an aging population. This high-level summit, hosted by Intel Corporation and its Chairman Craig Barrett, was attended either in person or via web cast by presidents, chairmen and executive directors of influential organizations including the National Business Coalition on Health, the National Medical Association, and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Susan Dentzer, PBS' on-air health correspondent for The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, moderated the event which was modeled on *Meet the Press*. The summit was organized around 3 expert panels with representation from health care associations, payors, policy-makers, advocates, providers and provider organizations, and health technologies.

The first panel discussed the potential impact of the age wave and chronic disease in the next generation from various perspectives.

Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, PhD (Chair of Medicine, Ohio State University College of Medicine) shared surprising and disturbing statistics on the adverse effects of chronic illness on caregivers. "Caregivers are the second victims."

Mark B. McClellan, MPA, MD, PhD (Sr. Fellow, AEI - Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies, The Brookings Institution) emphasized the need for a fundamental shift from "sick care" to "well care," and for re-alignment of the reimbursement system. He noted that patients and employers may be the strongest forces for change.

Suzanne Mintz (President/Co-Founder, National Family Caregivers Association) sounded a wake-up call, "Not a single family in America will be untouched by chronic illness."

Michael L. O'Dell, MD, MSHA, FAAFP (Chair & Director, Family Medicine Department and Residency Program, North Mississippi Medical Center) communicated the frustrations of providers, in particular a funding system that does not support an essential component of chronic care – coordination.

Craig Barrett (Chairman, Intel Corporation; Board Member, American Health Information Community) expressed disappointment in employers who have not taken advantage of the large amount of readily available health information technology (eg, personal health records, electronic medical records) that would improve care and reduce costs.

The second panel shared insights and experiences regarding current trends ("What is working?") and challenges ("What could we be doing better?") posed by chronic care and the aging population.

Steve Agritelley (Director, Product Incubation & Prototyping, Intel Health Research & Innovation Group) described almost a decade of Intel social science and ethnographic research, the insights gained, and the technologies being developed to affect behavior change.

Tracey Moorhead (President & Chief Executive, Disease Management Association of America) observed that a transition is occurring from "sick care" to "wellness" and predicted that "disease management" will expand to "population management." The challenge lies in proving value.

David Lansky, PhD (Senior Director, Health Program & Executive Director, Personal Health Technology Initiative, Markle Foundation) noted some successful applications of the Chronic Care Model and the promise of personal health records (PHR) as key trends. Challenges include integration of "silos" and improved outcome measures.

Carmella A. Bocchino, MBA (Executive Vice President, Clinical Affairs & Strategic Planning, America's Health Insurance Plans [AHIP]) discussed the positive impact of current information technologies on the effectiveness of disease management programs and the importance of standardized data, common templates and portability standards for PHR's.

The third and final panel infused "hope" into the discussion as they spoke about innovations and possibilities for the future in meeting the challenges posed by chronic care and aging.

Thomas Lee, MD, MSc (Network President for Partners Health System & CEO for Partners Community HealthCare, Boston, MA) predicted a safer, more efficient, better integrated health care delivery system in five years. New strategies will address variability at the individual physician level, increased efficiency through lean management technology, and comprehensive care designs for complex patients and end-of-life. These initiatives will require care coordination teams and payment reform.

Larry Minnix (President & CEO, American Association of Homes and Service for the Aging) described a nation-wide movement toward "green houses," a transition that sees care of the chronically ill and aging taking place in homes or home-like settings. De-institutionalization of large nursing homes into smaller, cottage-like settings increases satisfaction among patients and caregivers.

Carol Raphael, MPA (President & CEO, Visiting Nurse Service of New York) introduced several high-tech/high-touch initiatives – eg, a VNSNY program that provides tele-monitors (programmed in 8 different languages) for 400 heart failure/hypertension patients. Initial outcomes show a 14% decrease in hospitalizations and a 12% decrease in emergency room visits.

Mariah Scott, MBA (General Manager, Intel Personal Health Platforms) introduced the concept of using technology for decision support (for providers, patients and their caregivers) and for sustaining behavior change.

Allen Woolf, MD (Sr. Vice President & National Medical Officer, Health Advocacy, CIGNA Healthcare) described new inroads being forged by health coaches who equip people with information, technology and skills to modify behavior and to help sustain healthy behavior.