

COST AND VALUE IN HEALTH

“Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad”. Miles Kington



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Health is one of the most challenging factors facing global economies.

The structure of the current health systems only recognizes the reduction of expenses, the sources of revenue, the volume of care, without guidance for the valorization of clinical results.

When it comes to defining “Value” in health, from the point of view of a system, the equation “Value = Results/Cost” fails to consider some critical aspects of society’s interest, so a broader and holistic view is necessary.

The cost, denominator of the equation, refers to the total costs of the complete cycle of care to the medical condition of the user, not to the cost of individual services. To reduce costs the best approach is usually to spend more on some services to reduce the need for others.

The Value in Health Care, defined as the health outcomes achieved by each euro invested, is visible in the clinical benefits achieved by the investment.

Value, as a result in health combined with costs, should define the structure of performance improvement in the health system. The focus on Value in Health will result in a healthier, more productive and more resilient society.

Good results that are achieved efficiently are the goal, not the false “savings” generated by the costs variance and restriction of services. The only way to really restrain health care costs is to improve outcomes: in a value-based system, achieving and maintaining good health is inherently less expensive than dealing with health problems.

By placing the person at the center of health services, self-management of health is promoted, as well as the provision of health services based on cost-effectiveness in the community and closer to people.

These concepts profoundly alter the paradigm of how health care is provided to people: a networked approach, oriented to the team and to the management of patient care, with a responsible sharing of patient data, so that care is coordinated and informed.

Reorganize the provision of care around specific pathologies. The system of sequential and uncoordinated visits to various providers, departments and specialties works against Value. Instead, it is necessary to switch to integrated practice units that encompass all the necessary capacities and services throughout the entire cycle of each medical condition, including common co-existing conditions and complications; in this way, continuity of care is ensured through coordination between services along a value chain.

And with regard to the creation of Value in oral health?

We need dental medicine value-based models that provide quality of results and not amount of services.

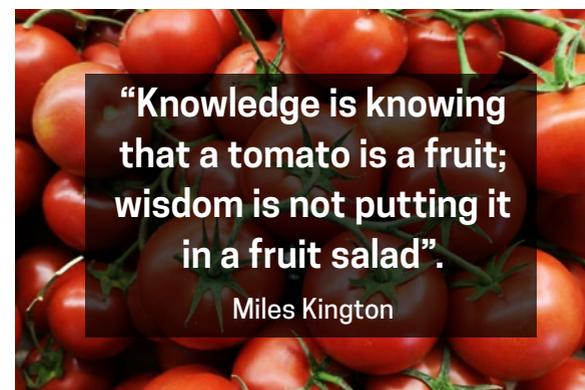
This approach would encourage prevention and personalization in care. The advantages of value-based care are clear: less waste, lower costs and, more importantly, better oral health for patients. Reaching this level will, however, require innovation, persistence and a redesign of the oral health system.

For more than two centuries, dental medicine and oral hygiene have been (and continue to be) practiced and made available in a fee-for-service reimbursement modality, payment per act, that is, the system encourages the performance of more and more complex procedures, not preventing diseases and higher costs, leading to misaligned financial incentives. This fragmented health system isolates oral health care providers from other healthcare

professionals and is not designed to achieve the best outcomes for patients.

New payment methodologies that focus on adequacy and patient-centered care for all patients through the dissemination of best practices have emerged with the objective of reducing ineffective care and inadequate use of services.

Value-based projects in oral health are more effective the more focused on prevention, focusing on minimally invasive procedures, taking into account risk levels to ensure an equitable distribution of resources, involving the integration of clinical data, a continuum of provision and a variety of person-centered models.



Value-based oral health care is designed to align the delivery system, person, provider, and community to achieve better health outcomes at lower costs.

Value measurement will also allow the reform of the reimbursement system to reward the Value by providing pooled payments, covering the entire care cycle or, for chronic conditions, covering periods of one year or more. Aligning the reimbursement with the Value in this way rewards providers for efficiency in achieving good results, while creating responsibility for lower quality care.

We need a better solution to pay for health care that compensates providers for providing superior value to patients: that is, by achieving better health outcomes at a lower cost. ■

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