University of Utah Health Plan Launches Accountable Care Program with Value Based Payments to Providers

Salt Lake City, UT – Officials at University of Utah Health Plans (UUHP) have unveiled the Accountable Care Program, which will serve 56,000 members in Utah. The new program includes a partnership for value based payments between the health plan and the University of Utah Primary Care Physicians Group and is the first Medicaid ACO plan to accomplish this in Utah. It’s a great example of the dramatically changing health care landscape, because it emphasizes outcomes of care rather than the fee-for-service model that exists in most health care systems today.

As part of the program, University physicians will monitor and coordinate all aspects of an individual’s medical care. This means patients with chronic conditions like diabetes will see one provider who will coordinate all that patient’s needs, such as diabetes care, eye care, and skin care. While patients most likely to see the immediate benefits of the program are those with chronic conditions, the program is available to all our plan members. Patients who receive their care outside of the University health system can continue to do so.

The objective of this new system is to increase member satisfaction, deliver higher quality, improve member health, increase access to care and lower medical expenses. “A major flaw within our healthcare system today, is that providers are paid for the volume of work they do, not for the value or outcomes of the work,” said Vicky Wilson, executive director, University of Utah Health Plans. “This program is the first step on our journey to improving quality of care while lowering costs.”

“Together, University physicians, care coordinators, along with University Health Plans, will work to achieve measurable improvements in patient care and sustainability of community health,” said Mike Magill, M.D., executive medical director of University of Utah Health Plans.

Critical to the program’s benefits are University registered nurses who serve as care managers and help patients with health challenges. Care coordinators are also key, as they use patient–specific health predicting data from UUHP, to coordinate care for patients leaving the hospital, remind patients of important health screening services, or help patients manage their prescriptions, for example. Other members of the team include pharmacists, dietitians, psychologists, specialists, and clinic managers.

UUHP supports the efforts of the care team by covering for services that are not typically covered benefits from an insurance company. A few examples of these enhanced services are team conferences, e-visits, telephone calls, etc.

University of Utah Health Plans was formed in 1998 as a marketing strategy of the University of Utah Medical Group and University of Utah Hospital. Since the time of its modest creation it has grown to serve over 141,000 members and has over 90 staff members. Health Plans is led by a knowledgeable, cohesive and capable leadership team with over 100 years of combined experienced in the Managed Care industry.