Preface

A Convergence of Themes: Making Evidence-Based, High Value Choices

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Editors

It would probably not be accurate to say that medicine is undergoing a revolution. It is more likely that the idea of “revolution” has been repeatedly applied to what has been evolving in health care in each of the last 50 years. We believe it is more accurate to state that each generation of physicians faces its own struggles, its own challenges, and its own opportunities and strives to implement its own innovations. In addition, each generation of physicians has nostalgic notions of what medicine used to be and anxiety about what medicine should and will be in the future.

Over the past 20 years, there has been an increased reliance and respect for evidence-based medicine, quality improvement, population health, using data to drive clinical changes, efficiency and effectiveness, and high-value care. In addition, there has been an outcry for patient centeredness, patient safety, shared decision making, and the importance of the provider/patient relationship.

Given this multitude of interests and themes, each with its own tag name, many physicians have grown weary of the “next thing.” In an effort to keep up with these evolving trends, many health systems have adopted short-term, sometimes shortsighted, incentives for the latest “trends.” This has often occurred at the expense of practicing clinicians, who have been bludgeoned by electronic health records, quality metrics, pay for performance, and whatever “theme du jour” that happens to be invoked for that particular timeframe.

As physicians who have witnessed massive changes over the last several decades, we now see that we are not merely on the precipice of the “latest and greatest” in health care, but rather at a convergence of the themes that have most recently dominated the improvement of health care. We see that all of these themes—managed care, evidence-based medicine, patient-centered care, quality and system improvement, shared decision making, bending the cost curve, and population health—are...
being applied as we conceptualize what health care will look like in the coming decades. While all of these trends have appeared to be seemingly unrelated, they have been converging and driving toward the same goal: increasingly higher-quality, safer health care for the most people at the least cost.

We are now being called on to engage with our patients on a personal and population level. We need to make decisions about health care that have been proven to be effective and to avoid those tests, medicines, and procedures that have been shown unequivocally not to have value. We must educate our patients so we may engage in a conversation of what is necessary and what is not. We must be stewards of population health care as we provide care for each individual patient.

The purpose of this issue of Medical Clinics of North America on “Quality Patient Care: Making Evidence-Based, High Value Choices” is to help inform clinicians about common medical conditions encountered in their practices and provide insight into making better diagnostic and treatment choices as we move toward more effective, more efficient, high-value care.

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