

## **Our Turn: How we're using data to make you healthier**

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November 27, 2015

### **Viewpoints: A new institute and information network was formed in Arizona to improve outcomes and prevent expensive visits.**

Three Arizona non-profits are collaborating in powerful ways to transform and improve health care for some of the state's most vulnerable residents.



(Photo: Photos.com)

A new federal grant is accelerating this transformation toward better care and lower costs, and positioning our state as a leader in integrated care.

The funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will help Arizona providers gather data and coordinate their patients' care, and focus their practices on how well patients do rather than on how many tests or other services they receive.

The \$3.6 million grant, with a potential award of up to \$14.6 million over four years, will support the new Practice Innovation Institute, a partnership of Arizona Health-e Connection (AzHeC), Mercy Care Plan and Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care.

Data collection and information sharing are critical to the success of health-care transformation and are the centerpiece of the Practice Innovation Institute. The more information your health-care providers have about you, the better treatment they can provide.

Our fragmented health-care system, however, imposes serious barriers to communication and whole-person care. The institute will work to break down those barriers, in part by helping health-care providers to communicate, share data and work as a team with their patients.

### **The ER example: How data can improve care**

A visit to a local hospital emergency room can illustrate the need for this transformation. There you might find a terrified 63-year-old woman who has been fainting all day and is feeling very weak. She's been brought in by ambulance, she's alone, and the ER team has no medical history about her.

Melissa Kotrys, CEO, Arizona Health-e Connection (Photo: ...)

Enter the statewide health information exchange, also known as The Network, a growing organization of Arizona health-care providers sharing secure health information to better serve their patients and reduce unnecessary procedures and services, such as ER visits.

The Network connects hospitals and providers across the state, providing an information bridge that links data about their patients. Had this patient's health information been available through The Network, her clinic would have learned of her previous hospital visit for heart trouble when she came in complaining of a sore throat.



Mark Fisher, CEO, Mercy Care Plan (Photo: ...)

The doctor would have known to prescribe an antibiotic that would not cause an adverse reaction to her heart medication. She would have left the clinic with a safe medication and without the trauma and expense of an ER visit.

Research shows that drug interactions, failure to follow treatment plans and non-medical social issues -- such as poverty and lack of transportation -- are primary reasons for preventable trips to the ER and adverse health outcomes. Coordinating care using shared health information can identify those issues early, improve health and well-being, and reduce health-care costs.

CEO Eddy Broadway at Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care in Phoenix (Photo: Michael Schennum / The Republic)

### **How the institute works**

The Practice Innovation Institute will help providers use The Network and work as integrated teams to take on value-based contracts, which offer financial incentives for better patient health outcomes. This is a major challenge for providers, both large and small, and this new environment will require significant change in the way health-care providers use technology to securely share patient information and coordinate care among all their patients' providers.



We have assembled an excellent team to drive this initiative. AzHeC leads the adoption of electronic health records in the state and operates The Network, which links hospitals, health plans, crisis providers, pharmacies, labs and other health-care organizations with a single connection.

Mercy Care, a 30-year-old health plan, and Mercy Maricopa, which administers the public behavioral-health and crisis systems, deliver health-care benefits and services to some of Arizona's most vulnerable people, including those with disabilities, severe and persistent mental-health conditions, children in the foster-care system, seniors and others requiring long-term care.

Together, we will develop and operate the Practice Innovation Institute that will support 2,500 providers to expand their capacity for quality improvement, share innovative ideas and best practices, and achieve the common goals of improved care, better health and reduced costs.

The Institute will provide hands-on assistance so providers can meet clinical and operational milestones, including reducing unnecessary procedures and hospitalizations, and increasing well-child visits, pediatric dental care, breast cancer screening and diabetes care.

We understand that these are complex problems and this will be a difficult task. We also have a clear vision of the benefits for Arizonans, and they're really quite simple: better health care and lower costs.

*Melissa Kotrys is CEO of Arizona Health-e Connection. Mark Fisher is CEO of Mercy Care Plan. And Eddy D. Broadway is CEO of Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care. For more information about the new Practice Innovation Institute, visit the website at [www.piiiaz.org](http://www.piiiaz.org).*