

Innovative leadership to make health care work better

Promoting care advocacy. UnitedHealth Group introduced unique programs for patient advocacy in 1999, in response to increased fragmentation in care delivery, greater complexity in disease treatment and human resource constraints surrounding care. Now widely recognized for their value in improving health care, the initial efforts have evolved into sophisticated services that apply technology and database analytic tools to help identify and eliminate the gaps in care that can lead to inappropriate, unsafe and inadequate use of precious health care resources. Successful in realizing these goals, such care coordination and facilitation services help physicians and patients organize access to needed services that improve quality and avoid costly complications and have been integrated into many care systems across America. As people grow older and live with more chronic disease, and new medical technology and treatments proliferate, the value of these patient and care advocacy programs will continue to increase.

Enhancing access to the best quality health care through Centers of Excellence. Recognizing the unique expertise of selected health care facilities and physicians to treat highly complex and rare diseases, UnitedHealth Group has for more than 15 years championed Centers of Excellence programs. The initial effort focused on organ transplantation and has grown to a preeminent service currently available to more than 42 million Americans. That experience also produced unique methodological design and data assessment expertise that is now being applied to other specialized networks of hospitals and physicians. The resulting designation of and access to high-performing hospitals and physicians for challenging clinical conditions — such as cardiac and congenital heart disease, cancer and musculoskeletal disorders — is a model for facilitating cost-effective access to the best treatment individualized around the needs of the specific patient. The Centers of Excellence concept is now moving to more regional and local centers that optimize clinical outcomes and ensure appropriate costs for more common but still significant medical conditions.

Addressing the needs of older Americans. As a leading advocate for the health and well-being of older people, UnitedHealth Group created a dedicated business to meet the health-related needs of people age 50 and older. Focused on the changing health issues and needs of this dynamic population instead of a simple product, this approach has helped expand health care coverage through the use of medical supplement plans, provide more affordable prescription drugs, apply care advocacy approaches to help care for frail, elderly and chronically ill individuals, and begin to address the challenges faced by pre-Medicare retirees.

Personalizing services for medically underserved individuals. UnitedHealth Group has extended its expertise in care advocacy to more than 1 million individuals who participate in state-sponsored health care programs — those who have often lacked access to health care services. These efforts combine community-based care networks with preventive services and intensive case management, including personalized social outreach and education programs, to serve the complex and unique needs of individuals in these settings. Specialized personal health service coordinators are used to target the most frequent causes of severe health conditions in medically underserved communities, including asthma, diabetes, sickle cell disease and high-risk pregnancies, to help people achieve and sustain better overall health while using health resources more appropriately.

Improving practice quality through physician data-sharing. An essential component of quality health care delivery is the continuous refinement of clinical practice based on critical analysis of performance and outcomes for individual physicians and medical practices. UnitedHealth Group has created database analytic tools that allow for the regular evaluation of clinical performance against evidence-based standards and expert physician guidance, and subsequent feedback of the results to individual physicians for their continued professional development. Having championed this type of physician data-sharing and positive feedback for more than a decade, the company has fostered significantly improved physician compliance with best standards, leading to cost-effective, quality clinical outcomes.

Promoting affordable and appropriate use of pharmaceuticals. Since creating the first truly integrated pharmaceutical management enterprise in the 1980s, UnitedHealth Group has been a pioneer and leader in the innovation, design and procurement of pharmaceutical products and services, making them more accessible and affordable, in addition to helping ensure they are used safely and in a manner that will achieve optimal health outcomes. Today, United Pharmaceutical Solutions serves more than 10 million individuals through creation of outpatient pharmaceutical benefit programs, discount purchasing of medicines, clinical interaction with physicians and other disease management entities, programs focused on injectable drugs, and assistance in managing the nation's leading drug benefit card that serves nearly 2 million seniors.

Engaging consumers in health care decisions. Health savings accounts and flexible spending accounts give consumers greater control as well as greater financial accountability for health care decisions. UnitedHealth Group, through its dedicated Consumer and Financial Services business unit, is at the forefront in individual consumer-driven products and capabilities using consumer cards. Through these programs, employers can leverage the buying power of more than 50 million people from UnitedHealth Group companies and affiliates to make their consumer dollar go further and deliver more value. This helps achieve broad, affordable access to quality care and resources across the widest spectrum of care services, including medical, dental, vision, behavioral, chiropractic and other ancillary and complementary services. To support better personal health care decisions, new and enhanced Internet information tools on myuhc.com® enable consumers to research the best treatment options, physicians and facilities for care, as well as find estimates of treatment costs for specific health care services in their immediate geographic areas.

Simplifying health care processes. Innovative new medical ID cards use the latest magnetic stripe technology combined with the convenience of the MasterCard® network to provide easy, on-the-spot verification of patient eligibility for medical services as well as benefit information. In addition, consumer account stored-value cards enable consumers to pay health-related expenses directly from their health savings accounts, flexible spending accounts and personal benefit accounts. Open architecture Internet portals for individuals, employers, physicians and brokers offer real-time access to self-service capabilities, such as online enrollment, billing, claim inquiry, claim submission, claim payment, benefit inquiry and physician selection. These Internet portals are now widely available through UnitedHealth Group and are used regularly by more than 3 million households representing more than 6 million people, 450,000 active registered physician and care provider user sites, 130,000 employers and 15,000 brokers. In 2004, more than 50 different transaction options will be available and more than 160 million transactions will be conducted using our Internet service portals — improving service quality, efficiency and accuracy, while also lowering costs.

Addressing disparities in health care. Against the backdrop of the recent Institute of Medicine report “Unequal Treatment” that documents the unacceptable variations in the quality of health care and health status experienced by minority and other populations of Americans, UnitedHealth Group has entered into partnerships with the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and the Foundation for Accountability to design and conduct analyses of variances in care delivery from national standards, and to provide innovative decision-support tools that apply to minority communities on the consumer Internet portal.

United Health Foundation — Making a difference in health care

Advancing evidence-based medicine. It is increasingly apparent that the basis for quality health care delivery and optimal outcomes is grounded in the successful translation of the best scientific evidence into clinical practice. In response to this need, the United Health Foundation, a private, nonprofit foundation funded solely by UnitedHealth Group, twice a year distributes *Clinical Evidence* free of charge to more than 500,000 of our nation’s physicians, physicians-in-training and nurses. *Clinical Evidence* is a comprehensive, international source for the best available information on the effective care protocols for more than 1,000 medical conditions, compiled by one of the most respected organizations in medicine, the BMJ Publishing Group (formerly the British Medical Journal).

Advancing community-based clinics. The United Health Foundation has provided grants to Unity Health Care, Inc. in Washington, D.C., and New York City-based Children’s Health Fund to introduce new Centers of Excellence models designed to improve access to quality health care in medically underserved communities. Multi-year support from the United Health Foundation funds health care teams that deliver integrated and coordinated preventive, clinical and community-based care services and target important medical challenges such as infant mortality, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and asthma. Through this initiative, thousands of children and adults will receive quality, comprehensive health care that would otherwise not be available. The project will also help the development of new models for cost-effective care that can be replicated throughout the nation.

Improving the health of America’s communities. Through a partnership with the American Public Health Association and the Partnership for Prevention, the United Health Foundation publishes *America’s Health: State Health Rankings*, an annual comprehensive state-by-state analysis of health status throughout the nation. This report, which is based on data from the U.S. Departments of Health, Commerce, Education and Labor, highlights positive trends in public health as well as significant challenges that require attention, thereby targeting the efforts of individuals, families, community leaders, employers and public officials to improve their own health and the overall health of their communities.