



Serving Individuals with Complex Care Needs and High Costs in a Changing Healthcare Environment

For the closing keynote presentation, **Richard G. Frank, Ph.D.**, Margaret T. Morris Professor of Health Economics in the Department of Health Care Policy at Harvard Medical School and **Joseph Parks, M.D.**, Medical Director at the National Council for Behavioral Health discussed how to serve individuals with complex care needs and high costs in a changing healthcare environment.

Health plans, accountable care organizations (ACOs), and health systems have more responsibilities and financial risk for health management than ever before. Dr. Franks outlined the future of organization and financing of health care, which includes continued reliance on markets, expanded use of budgeted or quasi-budgeted delivery systems, and the promotion of policy goals with incentives, competition, and market regulations.

The challenge for many organizations is that standard health management tools do not address consumers with multiple chronic conditions and/or complex support needs who use a disproportionate share of resources. Though insurance expansion and parity regulation have successfully increased service availability, Dr. Franks urges that further advancements must address the fundamental incentives in the main market and payment arrangements. He encourages behavioral health program directors to focus on what they're measuring and how, specifically, measuring the quality of care so that it recognizes the integration and appropriate use of psycho-social care which rewards good outcomes while avoiding client selection bias.

Dr. Parks discussed the challenges of access to care; including a psychiatry workforce shortage, psychiatric boarding with people waiting in hospital emergency departments for mental health services and insurance gaps. He also encouraged the enforcement of parity in payment rates so behavioral health providers won't continue to lose money.

Using a data driven approach, Parks recommended a framework for strengthening community treatments and crisis services. He stated that standardizing levels of care will ensure better matching to needed supports and help define needed staffing levels.

Health reform has left out behavioral healthcare, which doesn't have the workforce and funding to keep up with the advances in primary care. Dr. Parks supports the implementation of payment innovations that would allow community mental health centers to continue providing services, and recommended that the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act be protected and expanded.

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