

U.S. White House & Federal Agencies Recognize Westchester Health Associates As Alternative Payment Innovator

Chief Medical Officer Nancy Beran, MD, Pledges To Escalate Already-Impressive Campaign
To Produce More Value-Based Care

KATONAH, NY (March 25, 2015) – Westchester Health Associates was recognized at the White House this morning during an event that launched the Healthcare Payment Learning In Action Network, hosted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Center For Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI). Westchester Health Associates Chief Medical Officer Nancy Beran was invited to showcase Westchester Health’s great success in creating and implementing alternative care delivery and payment models over the past five years at the 120-physician, multi-specialty, community-based medical group. Dr. Beran was doubly honored by having the opportunity to introduce President Barack Obama to the audience.

At the White House event, Dr. Beran committed along with Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Burwell, to increase Westchester Health Associates’ already-strong efforts to improve population health, expanding its involvement in value-based care and alternative payment models. These measures include advanced primary care medical homes or possibly an Accountable Care Organization.

Dr. Beran also described how **Westchester Health Associates is enthusiastically embracing alternative payment models to achieve the ambitious goals of 30% value-based contracting in 2016 and as much as 50% by 2018.**

“It is only with the partnership of both CMS and other payers that we can meet these goals,” added Dr. Beran. “Over the past five years, we have learned that implementing a new model takes a financial commitment from multiple sources, both within our group as well from the payers. There also must be a critical mass of payers aligned on the common goals of the program, so that change will be meaningful and significant in the trial population.”

While having the proper funding is paramount, alignment of everyone in the practice also must be achieved. Clinical and clerical staff members -- from the doctors to the IT department -- must be educated. Advanced technology must be acquired and utilized. The success Westchester Health Associates has achieved to date would not have been possible by using outdated technology.

“We hope that our journey over the past five years can help to serve as a model for other smaller to mid-sized practices,” added Beran. “With the help of several partners, we believe we have helped to create a blueprint for other, similar practices to use in achieving success with alternative payments.”

At the end of 2012, Westchester Health had six medical home sites chosen to be part of a new program from CMMI, called The Comprehensive Primary Care Initiative. The goals included: implementing value-based medical care through transformed practices, driving down the cost of care, integrating care across the medical neighborhood, and aligning new IT to better understand the patient population and track patients in and out of hospitals.

Westchester Health Associates also partnered with Blue Cross Blue Shield to improve quality, access and the value of care. Through BCBS’s primary care initiative, Westchester Health received over \$200,000 in shared savings during just the first year of the program.

Countless success stories have surfaced over the past few years. One story that brings the alternative payment model to life centers on a 64-year-old female patient with COPD who often missed her appointments, neglected refilling her prescriptions, suffered from depression, and would go to the Emergency Room frequently for her care. But now, through Westchester Health Associates’ program, her ER visits are minimal, she has a COPD kit and plan that works for her at home, and she doesn’t miss her appointments, as she is more engaged with her care team of collaborating specialists, who also monitor and alleviate her depression.

“While the success stories are many, we do need to acknowledge that change can be very difficult for many practices and the pace of change we are advocating is rapid,” said Dr. Beran. “One of the barriers we face – and any healthcare provider would face -- is “change fatigue.” Physicians are overwhelmed and there’s a feeling that the demands are too many and too soon. Given this very familiar scenario, it is our job to ease this transition and provide the motivation, education, and support these doctors need.”

The mission behind Westchester Health is to deliver excellent, community based medical care that is patient-centered, compassionate, and quality driven. Alternative payment models allow Westchester Health Associates as a community-based medical practice to focus on caring for the health of its population.

Based on its programs, Westchester Health's leadership believes that the way to effectively care for a population's health is to compensate and reward providers for keeping a population healthy by utilizing quality medical care appropriately. For more information on Westchester Health Associates, go to: www.westchesterhealth.com.

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