

LETTER: OMNIA expanding consumer choices

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If there is one thing that the Summit Medical Group has learned from the millions of patients our physicians have treated over the last 85 years, it's that they want the kind of care that helps them live well and stay well. I believe most New Jerseyans feel the same way, which makes it all the more difficult to understand the puzzling health care debate surrounding Horizon BCBSNJ's well-care focused initiative, OMNIA. There is really no debate; OMNIA is a transformative approach to health care and is well overdue in New Jersey.

OMNIA health plans give patients the option to access quality health care services at a discounted cost. Consumers pay less in premiums to access Horizon's entire network, and if they choose a preferred tier, they save more on their out-of-pocket expenses. SMG is among the providers offering care at a discount to the patient, and the patient in turn receives the added benefit of a coordinated, patient-centered and well-care approach to medicine.

Quality is a large part of the equation, but health care costs and the prudent use of the patient's dollar must be factored into the approach to care. SMG has been a leader in matching quality with smart, integrated and coordinated care so that redundant diagnostic testing, over dispensing of prescription drugs and other expenses that do nothing to improve care can be removed from the economics of health care.

One of the principle goals of the Affordable Care Act was to create more choices for consumers and greater competition among insurance providers. President Obama said, "Insurance companies will have to compete with each other for your business and that means new choices."

Patients deserve choices when spending their money on health insurance. Moreover, they deserve to access a delivery model that helps them avoid chronic illnesses that can diminish the quality and shorten the length of their lives. The OMNIA initiative is a bold step that makes it possible for consumers to have a stronger voice and better choice in the quality and cost of their care. On that we should all agree.

Dr. Jeffrey Le Benger

Chairman and CEO

Summit Medical Group and Summit Health Management

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