

The Role of Retail Clinics in the Healthcare Continuum: Creating Strategies and Partnerships to Meet Consumers' Demands

LAURA GREENE: Welcome to HealthSounds: Conversations with Healthcare Innovators. This is Laura Greene for the Healthcare Intelligence Network. Today I am speaking with Dr. Steven Goldberg, corporate medical director for Humana. Dr. Goldberg is presenting at HIN's webinar on "The Role of Retail Clinics in the Healthcare Continuum: Creating Strategies and Partnerships to Meet Consumers' Demands." Welcome and thanks for joining me today Dr. Goldberg.

DR. GOLDBERG, CORPORATE MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR HUMANA: Laura it's a pleasure, thank you.

LAURA GREENE: To begin with, Humana includes the retail clinic chain MinuteClinic in its provider network. Has Humana noticed any impacts in retail clinics on its members non-emergency department use to date?

DR. GOLDBERG: Research is still early. What's clear is Humana members are using these facilities and it's our thought that the greatest opportunities to reduce ER visits are in those areas with limited primary care or limited ambulatory care facilities. But time will tell.

LAURA GREENE: Thank you Dr Goldberg. Since Humana began its partnership with MinuteClinic in October 2006, what kind of feedback are you receiving from members now that they can visit a retail clinic in addition to their primary care physicians?

DR. GOLDBERG: Sure. Glad to share with you Laura, and I want to emphasize, this is early feedback, very early feedback. In general, it's our view the most prominent factor is that convenience is driving the retail clinic use by our members. The good news is we're seeing a fair amount of PCP follow up, that's a primary care follow up within 30 days of a retail clinic visit. And we feel good about that. We are seeing a high number of repeat visitors to retail clinics, and we want to understand why that's occurring. We don't now know. We want to better understand overall their experiences, follow up with PCP, prescription refills, use of prescriptions etc. We are seeing a high number of prescriptions that come out of these encounters and we want to make sure they are ones that are needed and not seeing a pattern of over dispensing of medications. But again, no conclusions on that last number and more research is needed.

LAURA GREENE: I see. Thank you Dr. Goldberg. If you had to give one piece of advice to health plans thinking about including retail clinics in its provider networks, what would it be? Are there any pitfalls that you would advise them to avoid or lessons learned that you could share?

DR. GOLDBERG: My conclusion would be consumers are clearly walking with their feet and retail clinics have become very well received component of the delivery system. However, there's a lot more to know about what's actually coming out of those experiences the links to primary care, appropriate use of medications and such. So definitely need to be there, but more study needed.

LAURA GREENE: Okay. Thanks Dr Goldberg. And finally your co-presenter Dr. Atkins told us last week that retail clinics might

even have the potential to increase healthcare costs if members decide to visit a retail clinic if they need to see someone in a hurry and then visit a primary care physician for reassurance later on. What are your thoughts on that? Do retail clinics help decrease or increase the cost of healthcare?

DR. GOLDBERG: Laura I think it's too early to tell and I think we have to frame that important question in order to try to get it an answer. To my read retail clinics provide a narrow range of services including problems such as bladder infections, bronchitis, ear infections, sinus infections, strep throat, and also some others like flu diagnosis, mononucleosis evaluation etc. And you can go to the retail clinic websites to see exactly what they provide. If we look at the impact of these services on costs, and the cost of retail clinics providing these services versus family practice offices, emergency room visits, other ambulatory care settings that's how we can get it an answer. It's my view that in places where there aren't primary care settings or aren't ambulatory care settings and just ER's, then yes retail clinics can result in lower cost of care for this range of services.

LAURA GREENE: Thank you Dr Goldberg. Those are all the questions I have for you today. Thanks for being with us and we're looking forward to hearing from you during the webinar.

DR. GOLDBERG: Yes, we're looking forward too and welcome folks' questions after the presentation

LAURA GREENE: To register or get more information about this webinar, please call 1-888-446-3530. This is Laura Greene for the Healthcare Intelligence Network.