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Creating a Consensus to Improve Health Care

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## Commentary

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# Creating a Consensus to Improve Health Care

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*Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.*

Helen Keller

I agreed to participate in the Berkeley Forum in early 2012 with a healthy dose of skepticism seasoned with a dash of hope. I was quite frankly seduced by Stephen Shortell's (Dean, School of Public Health at UC Berkeley) energy and enthusiasm around a multi-party collaborative effort to improve California's healthcare delivery system. He convincingly outlined a plan to pull together CEOs of health insurers, hospitals, and physician organizations, as well as state regulators and policymakers to improve the affordability and quality of healthcare in California.

Did a path really exist, through industry collaboration, to change the current trajectory of sky-rocketing health care costs and deteriorating population health in California? Despite extreme doubts, Stephen had planted a seed of hope and I signed on. I recognized that the current approach was simply not working, and the numbers tell the story. Chronic conditions are on the rise – obesity up from 14.6% in 1995 to over 29% in 2010. Diabetes increased 68.6% over that same period. Healthcare expenditures per capita almost doubled since 2000. The picture – as shown in the Berkeley Forum Report – was far from rosy.

So the journey began, and progress was slow. It was difficult to agree on the key problems, much less the answers to those problems. Data were often inconclusive, and opinions were strong. Many times, we found ourselves chasing an elusive concept down a winding rabbit hole only to arrive at a dead end. But, after many, many hours of heated discussion and lots of caffeine, clarity and

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consensus began to emerge. Excitement started to build as we began to coalesce around a common vision and strategy related to integrated care systems and population health.

By the end of 2013, we had agreed on a plan and goals. For the first time, a diverse group representing different industry constituents agreed to work together to promote integrated care delivery and increase the emphasis on population health. We all left that last meeting personally committed to advancing these goals within our own organizations. At Anthem, we have followed through on that commitment by creating a new integrated care delivery system financial model that pays for outcomes rather than volume. This new system pays physicians to take the time to deliver high-quality, evidence-based health care that will result in improved overall health for Californians.

We have 14 California medical groups participating in the program representing approximately 7000 physicians. Consistent with our commitment to the Berkeley Forum and the shared vision to reduce the portion of health care expenditures paid via fee for service and increase the population receiving care from integrated care systems, we now have well over 100,000 Anthem members in these new systems.

Henry Ford once said, “Coming together is beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.”

The Berkeley Forum has come together to begin the process, has stayed together to achieve progress, and is now well on its way to success.