

# BACK TALK

## I Have a Better Idea, Mr. President

By George Pantos

President Obama has repeatedly challenged Americans who disagree with his approach to health reform to off their alternatives, most recently at his televised White House Health Reform Summit. "You got a better idea? Bring it on," he has said.

Here's a suggestion. Why not focus on streamlining health costs by harnessing technology that allows companies to take control of their healthcare expenses?

Businesses generally lack the data necessary to measure and manage their health costs, even though health care represents one of their biggest expenses. Executives have a better sense of how much money they spend on office supplies than where their health dollars are going. But with the cost of health benefits projected to increase 7 percent in 2010 -- and to double over the next seven years -- businesses can no longer afford to be unaware.

Some firms have a stake in preserving the costly status quo. Consider the insurance industry, whose top five companies recently announced profits up 56 percent from last year. Insurers' business models are largely based on keeping firms in the dark -- that is, preventing them from analyzing their own healthcare data and using the results to find alternative benefit structures that offer better outcomes at lower cost.

Companies have tackled customer relations and supply chain management with technology-driven strategies. Why not do the same for health benefits?

Such "Healthcare Performance Management" business strategies can alert companies to expensive problems within their benefits programs -- and help them find ways to implement money-saving fixes. The innovative technology for doing so exists. It just needs to be adopted on a grand scale.

Although benefits are growing ever-more expensive, most firms employ a limited number of tactics for trimming health costs. They may adjust the level of benefits employees receive, force workers to pony up a bit more, or switch to a different provider. But these primitive approaches yield only marginal savings.

Healthcare Performance Management offers employers an alternative. With HPM data, managers can gain insight into what is happening in their benefits plans -- insight that used to be the exclusive property of insurers.

For instance, on an aggregate basis, businesses could turn to HPM data to find out how many times the employee population had visited the doctor in the past year and correlate it with treatment data to ensure that their

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employees were following their doctors' orders. Using that information, management could use tested software tools to respond to patient risks -- and achieve real savings in the process.

Imagine if a segment of a company's workforce suffered from serious but treatable conditions like high blood pressure or high cholesterol. Many of these patients don't take their medications appropriately. Companies can use real-time dashboard features to manage these risk factors preemptively -- to the benefit of both workers and their bottom line.

Employers can also link their workers with specialized "coaches" to help them pursue personalized treatment regimes. These mentors can inform patients about lower-cost medicines or even prepare them to ask the right questions at the doctor's office.

Critically, technology-driven HPM strategies also allow for strict protection of employee privacy. Employers simply aggregate data and lean on third-party healthcare providers to engage their employees. Companies pay the bills, but private medical decisions are handled exclusively by doctors and patients. Executives don't need to know who's at risk -- they just need to know that a risk exists.

President Obama came into office promising the most technologically

savvy administration in history. Yet his healthcare reform plan virtually ignores common-sense money-saving technologies that we use in all other aspects of our lives. It's about time that changed.

*George J. Pantos, Esq., is Executive Director of the Healthcare Performance Management Institute. □*

## Glynn County Democrats events

- March 15 - General meeting at Unitarian Universalist, Brunswick, 7:00 p.m.

- March 20 - Political Breakfast, 9:00, Golden Corral

- April 17 - Political Breakfast, 9:00 a.m., Golden Corral, Brunswick.

- April 19 - General meeting, St. William Catholic Church, St. Simons Island, 7:00 p.m.

- April 26 - 30 - Qualifying Week, Filing deadline.

- May 1 - Five County Candidate Dinner at Stellar Conference Center, Brunswick. State-wide candidates invited to speak. Event includes participation from Camden, McIntosh, Wayne and Brantley Counties. Seating will be limited

For more details visit, [www.glynncountymocrats.org](http://www.glynncountymocrats.org). □

## Brunswick High to hold parent info sessions

Brunswick High School will hold two orientation sessions for parents of rising ninth-grade students (current eighth-graders) on Thursday, March 11. The first session will be held at 9 a.m. in the school cafeteria; the second session will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the school's testing center.

Parents will learn about expectations of students, class offerings and schedules, the International Baccalaureate (IB) program and other important topics for new high school students. Assistant Principal Matthew Blackstone will conduct the sessions with assistance from school counselors, the registrar and other school staff.

Also on Thursday, March 11, BHS will host its annual Advanced Placement (AP) night for parents and students interested in learning about AP classes and meeting AP teachers. AP classes enable students to earn college credit and to receive recognition from colleges and universities that annually receive AP Exam scores. The AP meeting will be held in the school's testing center at 5:30 p.m.

For more information about the information sessions, call BHS at 267-4100, ext. 6205. □

## "I never thought a chiropractor could change my life."

Lara Miler

"I met Dr. Carlyle at the Sea Island Health Fair. I told him about the doctors, medicines and treatment that I had without lasting results. He said he didn't know if he could help me until he did a neurological evaluation on me.

Reluctantly, I made an appointment and had the testing done. My next appointment we sat down and talked about me, my health problems and its correlation to the health of my nervous system. He was confident he could help me and good at explaining what was wrong.

I made the decision to start care and it was one of the best decisions I ever made. Now not only am I pain free, my migraines are gone, I sleep better, I'm happier and more energetic. I am healthy again!

I also take the Probiotics

recommended in Dr. Carlyle's Wellness Program. I had constant stomach and digestive issues, which frustrated me. I couldn't do the



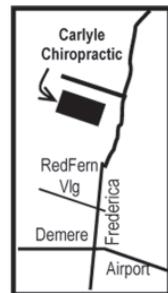
things I wanted to do and it effected my family. The Probiotics solved my digestive issues.

My re-exam showed great improvement in the health of my nervous system, which I now know control's every system of the body.

Based off my success, my son started care with Dr. Carlyle. We are now noticing the same health changes in him that I saw in me and I am excited about getting my daughters under his care too!

If you want to see a change in your life and the life of your family, please call Dr. Carlyle. He is honest and will let you know if he can help you and your family.

I am amazed at how fast I began to feel better. My energy level is up; my whole well being is better. My life has turned around. I never thought a chiropractor could change my life."



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