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RECENT EVENTS

LVBCH 41ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE: INNOVATIONS IN HEALTHCARE PANEL

Employers must collaborate with health care providers and insurers to increase employee wellness, as well as reduce the inequity in the health care system, said doctors participating in the *Innovations in Healthcare* reaction panel at LVBCH's Annual Meeting on May 4. Vicki Doule, Senior Vice President, BSI Corporate Benefits, moderated the discussion. Participating in the panel discussion were:

- Jennifer Chambers, MD, Senior Vice President & Chief Medical Officer
- Reetika Kumar, MD, VP Strategic Clinical Solutions, Market Medical Executive, AmeriHealth Administrators
- Rajika Reed, PhD, MPH, MEd, Vice President, Community Health, St. Luke's University Health Network
- Mark Wendling, MD, Executive Director, Valley Preferred, Lehigh Valley Health Network

Our nation needs to reduce money spent on unnecessary healthcare and divert the savings to help fight homelessness and hunger, said Dr. Chambers. According to a recent article, 25-30% of all healthcare dollars are spent on duplicative and unnecessary care. Further, the United States should use primary care more effectively in providing services for at-risk populations and in educating the population about lifestyle choices. Focusing on weight loss could reduce the need for many joint replacements, decrease the risk of diabetes, and improve overall health.

Dr. Mark Wendling said there are huge disparities in health care across our geography and the inequities in power, knowledge, and access are real and fundamental. Employers need to hold health systems accountable in addressing disparities. In working with patients, providers need to look at health needs from the patients' perspective, recognizing inequities. A lot of what we have to do is at the human, moral level and we have to commit to represent the voice of the patient. In regard to COVID, the speed of innovation – from concept to execution – has been impressive. In less than nine months tremendous advances were made in evidence-based care medicine and shared throughout the world's scientific and medical community.

Dr. Reed added that COVID brought to the forefront the importance of focusing on equity when addressing health disparities. To be more effective, we need to use an integrated approach working together in our system, but also through community partnerships. Also, we should continue to develop outcomes-based equity work and fine-tune data tracking systems to effectively speak to community needs and how we're addressing them.

Dr. Reetika Kumar said that according to her data, the use of virtual care increased 500 fold during COVID, and it's here to stay. Virtual care has advanced health engagement because it takes providers to where patients need them. Her golden rule is not to treat every patient the same but rather to treat every patient the way they need to be treated understanding the fragmented system is difficult to navigate. Also, Dr. Kumar advocates changing the model of how providers are incentivized and not pay for the amount of care provided but for the quality of the care provided.

[ABOUT THE PANELISTS: CLICK HERE FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE BIOS](#)

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