



WHOLE PERSON CARE – OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Historically, healthcare had focused on patients' immediate and singular concerns, hence treatment and care were episode specific. This led to a culture where healthcare providers would treat patients for their sickness only and not 'the person' as a whole. With an increasing prevalence of chronic multimorbidity and a shifting

Disjunct, disordered, and siloed data

focus on affordable, value-based quality care, the need for providing 'Whole Person Care' is widely recognized now.

Whole Person Care focuses on a multi-dimensional approach toward patient-centered care delivery by addressing an individual's specific and diverse medical, socio-economic, and behavioral needs.

High administrative burden on providers and payers

There exist several systemic roadblocks that the healthcare industry has to face to attain the capacity to deliver Whole Person Care. A few areas where the industry needs to focus on transforming its data and digital strategies would be:

Lack of transparency and control for the patient

Key Strategic Directions

This section explores some of the crucial strategies that the industry needs to adopt to get ready to deliver Whole Person Care.

1. Integrating Disparate Data Sources

Decision-making is the most crucial part of the patient care journey and decisions when backed by data have a higher probability to lead to desired outcomes. Today, approximately 30% of the world's data volume is generated by the healthcare industry and this will only increase in the future. With an increased focus on wellness and prevention, there is an additional need to incorporate data from digital health tools, connected health devices, IoT, and social and behavioral determinants to provide data that captures the Whole Person.

Therein lies an existing impetus to integrate the plethora of systems and data sources to facilitate the flow of data in a standardized format (HL-7, EDI, FHIR, etc.) to make it interoperable, secure, private, and easily available for a particular individual at the time of decision-making.

Integrating these different data sources will allow for a 360-degree view of a person's health.

- Electronic medical records
- Claims data
- Discharge summaries
- Lab reports
- Provider portals
- Fitness/wellness data
- Socio-behavioral data
- Population data, etc.

Insights from these will provide the bedrock for a comprehensive, timely, and customized care delivery to improve health outcomes.

2. Transforming Data into Meaningful Insights and Knowledge

Even post-data integration, there is a need to extract, link, and derive insights from the abundant structured and unstructured data for an actual tangible impact.

Technology and tools, along with AI/ML, can be used to expedite data ingestion (ETL, API, Queuing the data), data processing (ETL), data lake curation (Redshift, Azure SQL server), and data reporting (PBI, Tableau). Thereby enhancing the operations and data quality, transforming it into formats with relationships that render data useful for patient care.

These will not just extract the data, but will also make it traceable to its origin, codified to a specific person, relatable between the source and destination, and available when required to enhance decision-making. Thus, directly impacting the quality of care.

Decision & analytics tools can further support in enhancing care delivery domains, which include:

- Early diagnosis
- Clinical guidelines
- Evidence-based care
- Population health
- Reimbursement-related coding, etc.

3. Optimizing Resources in Healthcare Operations and Reimbursement

Enabling the provider front-mid-back office to optimize workload and resources, in addition to providing expedient quality care will also have a tremendous financial impact. With Whole Person Care becoming the center stage of care delivery, clinical documentation will improve drastically, enabling CDI specialists to access more relevant historical information. Medical coders will be able to code accurately, thus avoiding 'under coding' or 'over coding' leading to billing/coding errors, attracting fewer penalties and less revenue leakage.

As compared to providers, payers have a clearer view of the entire patient journey, and by getting involved in the care delivery process, they would be able to influence the decision-making process, aiming at better outcomes and reduced cost burden.

Using tools such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA), chatbots, and conversational AI, payers and providers will enable resource optimization by reducing/eliminating the need for manual intervention in case of repetitive, algorithmic administrative activities.

4. Creating an Enhanced Experience for Providers and Payers

A consistent issue with providers and payers is the need to use disparate clinical and administrative IT systems and processes to perform care delivery. These, in addition to disjunct siloed data sources, function as added impediments as they increase the administrative burden and documentation fatigue.

With a focus on enhancing the user experience through value realization and design thinking, a unified platform-centric

approach for healthcare operations and payer processes shall enable a quicker, more efficient, and quality delivery of services.

5. Giving Patients an Agency of their Health

Whole Person Care brings the patient into the 'sphere of influence' of making decisions for their illness or treatment. With healthcare data and the patient journey made available for reference, it would enable and empower the patient to make the right and informed decisions for their well-being. This will also strengthen the physician-payer-provider relationship as the entire care delivery would be backed by data, making it more efficient and transparent, thereby enabling easy access to quality healthcare for all.

Conclusion

Though the concept of Whole Person Care is gradually gaining traction, the healthcare industry is still lagging in its capacity to adopt the model. To bridge gaps between the current healthcare state and take it to the Whole Person Care model, there needs to be a rehaul of the building blocks of technology solutions to enable healthcare delivery and operations.

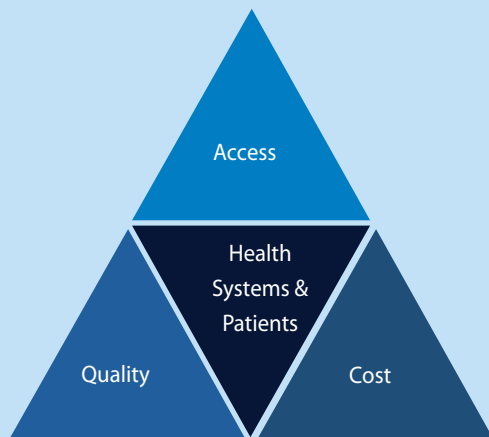


Fig: 1 The Iron Triangle of Health

The entire healthcare industry is in need of a complete digital transformation, and it is ripe for leveraging innovative technological advancements to better address the Iron Triangle of Health for all.





About the Authors



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- Gautam is an Army veteran and has an overall 12 years of domain experience in the field of Clinical Medicine, Clinical Operations, and US Healthcare
- His expertise lie in the areas of Health Information Management, Healthcare Operations Management, Project Management, Training & Development, Assisted Captive Set-up and Process Improvement
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