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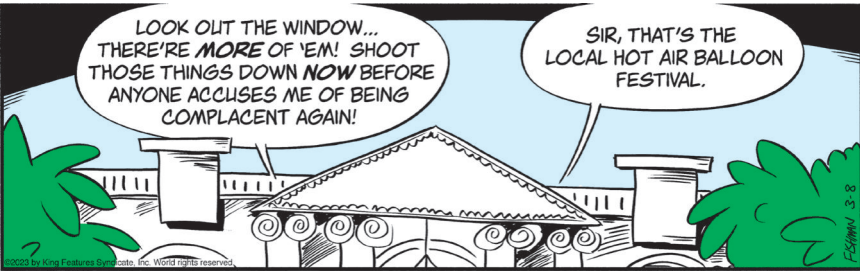
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CONSERVATIVE CORNER | MALLARD FILLMORE

By Loren Fishman



A VIEW FROM THE VILLAGES HEALTH

At The Villages Health, we want to do our best for our patients. We like to have our fingers on the pulses of our patients' needs and their health care concerns.



Jeff Lowenkron

COMMENTARY

As a result, at times we ask our patients questions about certain topics or health areas they would not normally bring up on their own yet are really important to their health and well-being.

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which has about 64 million beneficiaries on Medicare across the country, gathers information by understanding what services they are paying for with claims made. Understanding services generating claims identifies specific health areas that CMS believes require more attention.

CMS finds out about these problems after the fact and concludes that if these problems

are addressed earlier, then their beneficiaries will do better. As such, they have asked payers to build programs that address these opportunities. Payers then ask health systems, like TVH, to build programs to address these problems earlier. Ideally, the new programs will address the concerns which in turn helps our patients to stay healthy, or if sick, be healed quickly.

The Villages Health accepts that CMS draws from a far more robust experience than TVH and will be able to draw conclusions based on this experience more accurately and completely than can TVH. TVH knows that there are certain problems that occur frequently and affect a significant portion of our patient base. There are also certain problems that can be addressed before they become problems.

By asking about these problems during patient visits we can work with the patient to get ahead and stay on top of their health. While we know not everyone has problems with falls or holding their urine, it is common enough that every day we will be finding patients who are discussing this problem

with us for the first time. Our experience has been that those patients have been very happy with us for asking and feel that this can finally be addressed. TVH has removed the embarrassment and allowed for a care plan to be developed.

For the last six months, we have been embedding survey questions into our process that ask about patients' experiences with us. In doing this we want to make sure we help our patients have better outcomes for their health.

By asking these survey questions, we are giving our patients an opportunity and platform to let us know if they are receiving the care that they desire and need. Even though some of these topics might be a source of discomfort to talk about, the problems are common, and we want to help our patients. CMS will also be asking additional general questions about your overall care experience:

- » How easy was it to get an appointment with your personal doctor?
- » How long after your scheduled appointment time did you wait to see your doctor?

For the last six months, we have been embedding survey questions into our process that ask about patients' experiences with us."

- » Did you have any difficulties getting a referral to see a specialist from your doctor?
- » Did your doctor seem informed and up to date about the care you received from a specialist?
- » Did your doctor or other health provider review all your prescription medications with you?
- » Did you receive follow up from your doctors' office after any blood test, X-ray, etc.?
- » Did your doctor or other health provider talk to you about how to prevent falls or treat problems with balance

or walking?

» Did your doctor or other health provider talk to you about ways to better control leakage of urine?

» During your visit did your doctor or other health provider advise to start, increase, or maintain your exercise level?

Our hope is that through dialogue with our clinicians, patients can identify potential health concerns that otherwise might not have been addressed. In doing this, we can better help patients get ahead of health issues before they develop into a much larger problem.

Addressing the issues early allows us to work with our patients to create a plan that can help them return to good health or reduce risk. Overall, our patients' feedback contributes to a more positive patient experience and can improve the services we provide for the betterment of quality of life for our patients so they can more thoroughly enjoy their lives.

Dr. Jeff Lowenkron is the chief medical officer for The Villages Health.



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