

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

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High-value primary care can save hospital visits— and money

For non-life-threatening issues, patients can rely on an independent general practitioner, says the Alliance of Health Care Sharing Ministries

WASHINGTON D.C. — As more Americans seek to take charge of their own health care decisions, the role of high-value primary care is vital to giving patients more options.

“In many cases, a high-value, independent primary care physician is better suited to address most medical needs because they are more likely to know their patients better and to weigh overall health considerations,” says Katy Talento, executive director of the Alliance of Health Care Sharing Ministries (The Alliance, ahcsm.org). “Specialists certainly are important, and in some cases, vital, but they are not always needed.”

Research indicates that access to high-value, independent primary care has numerous benefits. “[It] is linked to better health outcomes, including improvements in self-rated health and a reduction in all-cause mortality,” according to [pharmacist Yolanda Smith](#).

“Primary care is known to place a greater emphasis on the health of the whole person rather than a specific organ or system, which may contribute to positive effects such as reduced mortality rates due to the accumulated contribution of the care,” Smith wrote. As more and more physician practices are being acquired by large, corporate hospital systems, the importance of independence for primary care practices is critical. Only with independent practices, such as Direct Primary Care practices, can patients be reassured that their doctor’s referrals and recommendations are not affected by financial incentives and outright pressure by corporate administrators to steer patients to unnecessary or overpriced services that are the most lucrative for the system.

“Patients can also save time and money by using independent labs instead of hospital-based labs, and freestanding imaging and surgery centers instead of hospital radiology or surgery departments,” Talento says. “The cost differences can be exponential—patients can save thousands of dollars when their primary care doctor refers them to independent specialty care instead of hospital-controlled care.”

Direct Primary Care, a growing movement among family practitioners that charges patients a monthly fee for unlimited access to their doctor, is particularly designed to both control costs and increase quality with relationship-based and coordinated care that is free of an insurance middleman or billing bureaucracy. An

[article](#) at Cleveland.com noted that “routine laboratory and imaging tests— such as complete blood count (CBC), comprehensive metabolic panel (CMP), mammograms, X-rays and CT scans— can help physicians detect illness early, monitor patients’ health and save lives, according to the American Clinical Laboratory Association.”

The publication found significant discrepancies in prices comparing independent labs to hospital-based labs, noting that tests “can also wreck a family’s health care budget— especially families with high-deductible health insurance plans that require out-of-pocket payments.”

“During this time of increased transparency about the price of services, it pays to shop around,” Talento says. “Health Care Sharing Ministries encourage their members to find excellent services at reasonable prices, whose costs can be shared with other members.

“Health Care Sharing Ministries are about expanding choices and giving patients more control over their own health care,” Talento says. “High-value primary care and independent specialty care are particularly compatible with the cost-conscious and independent-minded members of Health Care Sharing Ministries.”

Founded in 2007 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., *the Alliance of Health Care Sharing Ministries* is a 501(c)(6) trade organization representing the common interests of Health Care Sharing Ministry organizations which are facilitating the sharing of health care needs (financial, emotional, and spiritual) by individuals and families, and their participants. *The Alliance* engages with federal and state regulators, members of the media, and the Christian community to provide accurate and timely information on medical cost sharing.

Learn more about the *Alliance of Health Care Sharing Ministries* visit www.ahcsm.org or follow the ministry on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

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