

PMC scales new heights, first hospital in the nation to earn a key certification

By Ken Datzman

TITUSVILLE — These are trying times for chief executive officers and leadership teams of health-care organizations. There are increasing demands on CEOs to lead effectively in a complex and rapidly changing health-care industry, one that has long centered on volume and bottom-line numbers. Rough-and-tumble competition in markets for services has made it an even more ferocious environment for hospitals and care organizations.

Some hospital CEOs across the nation have shifted the dynamics by creating innovative strategies and transformative integrated models to deal with change by putting the focus on patient safety and quality of care, while working to reduce costs overall.

These CEOs have gone beyond the call of duty and have shown their dedication to high-quality health care in their respective communities. One of them is George Mikitarian, who has led Parrish Medical Center as president and chief executive officer since 2001.

Under his leadership, PMC has been singled out for its accomplishments in the field by a host of well-regarded organizations, including the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, HealthGrades, The Leapfrog Group, J.D. Power & Associates, American Alliance of Healthcare Providers, "Consumer Reports," and The SafeCare Group.

Now, PMC has become the first hospital in America to be awarded "Integrated Care Certification" by The Joint Commission. The Midwest organization is the nation's premier health-care accrediting body. PMC is a 210-bed, independent not-for-profit public medical center. It has served North Brevard County for more than a half-century.

The Joint Commission began offering Integrated Care Certification in July 2015 to recognize hospitals and ambulatory-care settings that excel at integrating "information-sharing, transitions of care, hand-off communications," and other key activities as a patient moves between the hospital and outpatient-care settings. The Joint Commission says this new certification, covering a three-year term, is the starting point for improving patient outcomes by providing better coordinated care.

"This has been a long road for us," said Mikitarian. "Even before the passing of the Affordable Care Act, this organization set out on behalf of the people we serve, as a public hospital, to improve quality, improve safety, and reduce costs. And we have been fortunate in that our board members, our physicians, our employees, and our auxiliaries have all believed in the same mission, which is doing what's best for the people and the health of this community."



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Parrish Medical Center in Titusville is the first hospital in America to earn The Joint Commission's new Integrated Care Certification. The accreditation organization began offering this designation last year. Integrating care across the entire spectrum of services visited by a patient can help to reduce the costs and improve the quality of care, says The Joint Commission. From left, the PMC executive management team includes: Chris McAlpine, senior vice president, administration transformation; George Mikitarian, president and CEO; Natalie Sellers, vice president, communications/community and corporate services; and Edwin Loftin, vice president, acute-care services and chief nursing officer.

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Parrish Medical Center

Continued from page 1

Mikitarian says he has long embraced the old saying, “Don’t tell me what you believe in or value, show me your checkbook — your budget — and I will tell you what you believe in or value. Anybody can come into this organization and look at our budget and see that we have committed ourselves to improving all of our processes, all of our systems, and all of our relationships, with the goal to improve quality and reduce costs. So this Integrated Care Certification is a validation that we have focused on doing the right thing.”

Certification reviews include visits to sites within a program’s defined integrated environment. During these visits, reviewers evaluate issues such as clinical integration, management of information, and performance-improvement activities that span across the sites.

Mikitarian has received e-mails and calls from hospital executives and from various leaders of care organizations around the state and across the nation congratulating Parrish Medical Center on leading the way within its industry to improve outcomes through seamless integration and coordination of care.

The first of these congratulatory e-mails came from Rochester, Minn.-based Mayo Clinic, and from its Florida facilities. Recently, PMC became the 29th member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network of providers throughout the nation and the third in Florida. The partnerships extend Mayo Clinic’s knowledge to physicians and providers that are working together in the best interest of their patients, said Chris McAlpine, PMC’s senior vice president, administration transformation.

“There is a lot of collaboration. We have conference calls with the Mayo Clinic every two weeks discussing the different initiatives that we are working on and how the Clinic can support those initiatives and what resources they can bring to bear,” he said.

PMC also has established “Parrish Healthcare,” a regional integrated care network. The network includes PMC, the Parrish Medical Group, which is certified as a patient-centered medical home, and the Florida Health Network, a regional network of providers, payers, and others working to improve quality and safety while lowering the cost of care.

“Chris (McAlpine) has spent a lot of his time identifying, externally, who the quality players are in the realm of health care and has worked to cultivate those relationships in developing structures that complement Parrish Healthcare,” said Mikitarian, who holds a doctorate degree in health-care administration from the Medical University of South Carolina.

Mikitarian’s veteran executive management team includes McAlpine; Edwin Loftin, vice president, acute-care services and chief nursing officer; and Natalie Sellers, vice president, communications/community and corporate services.

“As an organization, we have been quietly going about this for many years, working to make sure a patient’s care is carefully coordinated,” said McAlpine. “It’s been an investment of our resources and the investment has been in the hospital and in the community. I think we are now much better positioned, especially as the economy improves, to attract businesses to locate here. Why? Because

they see that our operations are efficient and over the long term they will have a healthier work force and they will benefit financially.”

More than one-sixth of the U.S. economy is devoted to health-care spending, according to the Center for Policy and Research. With rising health-care costs, for small businesses and Fortune 500 companies alike, it is becoming more expensive to add new employees.

The new Integrated Care Certification standards are designed to be flexible to accommodate different system types, from large hospitals with multiple campuses to small independent hospitals, and from small primary-care practices to large multidisciplinary groups.

The certification requirements will help organizations develop a foundation for using data to identify their “risk points” and then determine ways to better manage those risks. Integration is a process that the Joint Commission sees as the next evolution in health care.

“To be integrated, you’ve got to start internally,” said Loftin. “We had to make sure that our operations within the four virtual walls of PMC are completely integrated, that we have an open sharing of information, that we are transparent in our outcomes, and our quality — everything, from our nursing units to physician practices to Parrish Health and Fitness to our Port St. John facility. All of our operations have to be parts of the same wheel that’s moving along.”

He added that one of the national organizations that has been out front developing a framework to improve health care has been the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. “That organization established what is known in the industry as the ‘Triple Aim,’ which is improving the outcome care of individuals and improving the health of the community and doing it at lower costs.”

In 2008, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement proposed the Triple Aim, a strategy to achieve better health and system performance based on the simultaneous pursuit of improved care for individuals, better health for populations, and reduced per-capita health-care costs. This concept became an important part of the “care redesign innovation opportunities” built into the national strategies developed as a result of the Affordable Care Act of 2010.

In a study in the June 2015 issue of “The Milbank Quarterly,” the Institute for Healthcare Improvement team — which played a leading role helping organizations pursue the Triple Aim — looked at how this work has progressed in the last seven years — specifically, why some organizations have made progress implementing the Triple Aim and others have not. The 93-year-old “Milbank Quarterly” features peer-reviewed original research, policy review, and analysis from academics, clinicians, and policymakers.

Before 2011, many Medicare payments to health-care providers were tied only to volume, rewarding providers based on how many tests they ran, how many patients they saw, or how many procedures they did, for example, regardless of whether these services helped the patient.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has moved its payments from “volume to value,” said Loftin. “Health-care systems that are reliant on volume are going

to suffer over the long term because reimbursements have shifted. When we can take care of one individual and provide value to his or her health care and to his or her lifestyle, well, that’s what CMS is looking for, and it’s the model of the future for health care.”

In January, CMS proposed rules that will expand access to analyses and data that will help providers, employers, and others make more informed decisions about care delivery. The new rules, as required by the “Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act,” will allow organizations approved as “qualified entities” to confidentially share or sell analyses of Medicare and private-sector claims data to providers, employers, and other groups who can use the data to support improved care. In addition, qualified entities will be allowed to provide or sell claims to providers.

The rule also includes strict privacy and security requirements for all entities receiving Medicare analyses or data, as well as any new annual reporting requirements. This initiative is part of a broader government effort to create a health-care system that delivers better care, spends dollars more wisely, and results in healthier people.

“If there were integrated networks across the nation and if the patient was the focus — not the company — there would be no need for national or universal health care,” said Mikitarian. “Health care would be high quality, have low core cost, and be accessible to everyone. Those who argue otherwise just don’t get it.”

The work that PMC has been doing over the years is paying off with national recognitions in critical areas of its operations. For example, in December, PMC was recognized by The SafeCare Group for excellence in quality, patient safety, and efficiency in its 2014–2015 “100 SafeCare Hospitals” listing. “We’re very proud of that recognition, being named as one of the 100 safest hospitals by the SafeCare Group, which evaluated all publicly available outclaims data,” said Loftin. “We were very strong in that particular evaluation.”

PMC ranked a full three standard deviations above the national average in patient safety, placing it within the top 2 percent of hospitals nationwide, and had the top score in Florida for the “CMS Hospital-Acquired Conditions Reduction Program.”

The “100 SafeCare Hospitals” listing honors hospitals that excel in evidence-based areas required under the Affordable Care Act. Only the 100 hospitals between 100–400 beds with the highest score made the list. If all U.S. hospitals attained the “100 SafeCare Hospitals” level, there would be a lowering of the more than 400,000 preventable patient deaths and millions of preventable complications that occur each year, the report says.

Mikitarian says PMC “stands able and willing to help any organization down the same path we have taken (to earn Integrated Care Certification). Our board is willing to help other boards, our medical staff is willing to help other medical staffs, our employees are willing to help other employees, and our volunteers are willing to help other volunteers understand where health care has to go. We can no longer just worry about ourselves like we are an island unto ourselves. It’s about the population and the communities we serve.”

A giant leap for healthcare



Parrish Medical Center is the nation's first to be awarded Integrated Care Certification.*

With this certification, we are pleased to introduce **Parrish Healthcare®**, a regional **integrated care network**. Our integration includes **Parrish Medical Center**, a Mayo Clinic Care Network member and one of the nation's most recognized hospitals for clinical quality, patient safety and healing environments; **Parrish Medical Group**, NCOA certified as a patient-centered medical home; and **Florida Health Network®**, a regional network of healthcare providers, insurers and others working together to improve quality and safety and lower healthcare costs on behalf of individuals, families and businesses.

We're proud to be the nation's first, and therefore the only, to provide care integration as certified by America's premier healthcare accrediting body*. It's a giant leap forward.



*An independent, not-for-profit organization,
The Joint Commission accredits and certifies nearly 21,000
healthcare organizations and programs in the United States.

Joint Commission accreditation and certification is recognized nationwide as a symbol
of quality that reflects an organization's commitment to meeting certain performance standards.

Healing Families—Healing Communities®