Retail Clinics: Improving Coordination of Care

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Abstract

Retail clinics are a growing part of our health care system and communication between retail clinics and medical homes is an important part of safe health care delivery. As the projected decline in the generalist physician workforce is expected to grow to a shortage of over 100,000 by 2025, retail clinics have the opportunity to offer access to care for patients with common illnesses and to allow physicians to manage chronic disease and more complex conditions.

If the Affordable Care Act gets fully implemented in 2014, millions of Americans will have health insurance and convenient care clinics may offer access for patients who don’t have a medical home or who have high deductibles.

Since 2000 retail clinics have grown from almost none to 1,300 and their numbers are increasing steadily. From 2007-2009 of Aetna’s 13.3 million enrollees, 3.8 million of them made at least one visit to a retail clinic (28%). As of 2008 forty-two operators ran nearly 1,000 retail clinics in thirty-three states and 88.4% were located in urban areas.

Convenient care clinics deliver care at a lower cost. Coordination with patients’ medical home should be accomplished as much as possible to increase quality, decrease costs, and fewer errors. The Board of the Convenient Care Association should require that all CCCs they approve put in a good-faith effort to coordinate care with the patient’s medical home. If this cannot be accomplished though their own accrediting body the next step would be to add state or federal regulations.