

how and why

Readmissions NEWS

Catching Up With ...



Thomas Cornwell, MD

Chief Executive Officer, Home Centered Care Institute (HCCI)

Dr. Cornwell founded Home Centered Care Institute in 2012 after receiving a large philanthropic gift to create a national education and research organization whose mission is to expand house call programs and the workforce nationally. He has received extensive local and national media attention including features in the NY Times, TIME Magazine and PBS. Most recently Fast Company named him a 2017 top 100 Most Creative People in Business for bringing health care into the home.

Readmissions News: Why are house calls important in health care today?

Dr. Cornwell: Many people think house calls are a thing of the past. Not so.

Today's house call visits – known as home-based primary care (HBPC) – combine the expertise and advanced technology of a health care clinic with the convenience and comfort of home. This care model is proven to benefit providers, payers and, of course, patients.

House calls matter because 4 million Americans are unable to leave their homes to obtain basic primary care. Due to a lack in proactive care, a shocking 5 percent of Medicare beneficiaries account for 50 percent of Medicare spending. This statistic should come as no surprise to those familiar with the challenges posed by an aging and increasingly unhealthy population. Our current "911 culture" exacerbates the problem and leads to repeated, costly hospitalizations for chronically ill, medically complex patients, many of whom have no other health care resource. HBPC and home health care can break that cycle.

Readmissions News: How can home-based primary care reduce costs?

Dr. Cornwell: Today, the practice of health care is in a state of tremendous transition. Rising costs, a strain on resources, and ever-changing policies and fee structures have left health care providers struggling to provide cost-effective, quality care for patients. The aging population, especially, is at risk for being underserved. By working together, home health and HBPC providers can help achieve health care's "Triple Aim": improving the quality of life for our nation's most complex patients, delivering substantially better experiences for patients and caregivers, and dramatically reducing health care costs.

HBPC is proven to reduce health care costs for chronically-ill patients by keeping them at home, where they can be better cared for. In fact, according to figures from the Strategic Healthcare Programs in California, making more than one home health visit in the first seven days reduces the likelihood of readmission to as low as 11.4 percent. Collaboration with skilled HBPC providers further increases the likelihood of the patient remaining at home. For instance, a study published in the *American Journal of Medicine* found that discharge with home health care was associated with a significant reduction in healthcare utilization and decreased hazard of readmission and death. Moreover, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality review found supporting evidence that HBPC reduces utilization of hospital services and can lead to improved quality of life.

Readmissions News: What are some of the challenges related to implementation?

Dr. Cornwell: A significant challenge to providing proactive home-based primary care is the shortage of a trained HBPC workforce. The [Home Centered Care Institute](#) is working to address this gap in the workforce through classroom-based workshops, field experiences, and online learning resources. Education in building interdisciplinary teams and developing relationships with community-based services as part of the continuum of care is an important part of that curriculum.

We have the privilege and the responsibility of caring for patients in their homes. We owe it to them to build lasting collaborations and bring the best of what we provide individually to bear, together, upon this vulnerable population.

Readmissions News: Lastly, tell us something about yourself that few would know.

Dr. Cornwell: As a practicing physician with over 30 years of experience, I have dedicated my career to HBPC, and I've personally made over 33,000 house calls. I understand the difference that home-based care makes in patients' lives and the value it brings to the health care industry.