

With great enthusiasm and a bit of apprehension, we are happy to accept the opportunity and responsibility associated with the editorship of *The American Journal of Managed Care*. Managed care, throughout its evolution, has been subjected to extensive criticism, only some of it deserved. Recently, some observers have concluded that managed care, as it has come to be known, is dead. Yet, no matter what name the US healthcare system or its components are given, the fundamental challenges that led to the rise of managed care (and the *Journal*) have yet to be resolved. We feel these challenges have intensified and will remain on the forefront of this country's policy landscape. Thus, we are excited to lead and immerse ourselves in one of the preeminent venues for discussion of the organization, financing, and delivery of healthcare.



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A large majority of the population insists on health insurance coverage, which is believed by some to be a fundamental right. However, despite the popularity of health insurance coverage, decades of experience suggest writing a blank check for all desired healthcare expenses is simply an untenable and unsustainable approach to healthcare financing. Thus, regardless of the details, society will continue to struggle with the issues of how to allocate and finance healthcare services, mitigate financial risk, promote high-quality delivery of care, and encourage healthy behaviors. Although the roles and responsibilities of the numerous stakeholders may evolve, the desire to build a healthcare system focused on prolonging life and enhancing its quality in an economically efficient manner should remain unwavering. As Americans do so, they must recognize they will face important distributional issues concerning the allocation and financing of care.

Given all of these issues, we take a very broad view of managed care—one that encompasses all efforts to address the clinical and economic outcomes of healthcare interventions. We will work diligently and energetically to make the *Journal* an invaluable resource for conceptual and applied research, practical applications of new knowledge, and a venue for open debate about these broad sets of issues.

As it has for decades, the healthcare sector continues to face challenges. We believe these tribulations stem from a fundamental tension between the desire for unfettered access to healthcare services by the population and profound concern regarding the cost of those services. The marvels of new medical technologies, which provide opportunities for improving health in new and better ways, often create a financial dilemma. As you know, enormous efforts are being made in the healthcare sector to improve clinical

# the New Editors

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outcomes, quantify the quality/cost trade-offs, and ultimately better manage expenditures. While this is not the time nor place to mention specific initiatives, we believe they are all linked by a common thread: the requirement that scientifically valid information guide them.

By providing this information, the *Journal* can play an increasingly important role. This simple statement is the basis for our enthusiasm. We recognize the need for rigorous science to identify clinically effective and cost-effective patterns of care. Yet clinical research, as indispensable as it is, is only a piece of the puzzle. Research is needed that examines the attributes and details of care delivery systems and the regulatory regimes that generate desirable clinical and economic outcomes. This research must focus on how individuals and organizations, including patients, providers, medical care technology producers, insurers, employers, and policy makers respond to incentives and con-

straints. All of us need to better understand how these stakeholders react to one another and change their behavior based on new data. Will decision-makers respond to research findings—if yes, how so in different environments? How can the outcomes of the health-care system be measured and how might difficult choices be faced in a reasoned way? It is not enough to know which interventions are safe and efficacious. Ways must be found to translate this clinical research into practice and encourage researchers from multiple disciplines and perspectives to further address these issues on several levels.

We believe the research community must be proactive in raising questions relevant for delivery of care, design of health systems, and formulation of policy and devoted to addressing those questions rigorously. Researchers must also support activities such as the design of interventions to improve clinical and economic outcomes and the evaluation of those outcomes. Finally, researchers need to develop and refine the tools necessary to perform those tasks.

Given this paramount importance of research, we believe that *The American Journal of Managed Care* can play an important role as the healthcare system evolves. The *Journal* has a unique and accomplished readership of more than 50,000 healthcare professionals, many of whom make decisions affecting the delivery of care and patient behavior on a daily basis. Moreover, our experience suggests this sector has attracted professionals with unparalleled dedication to the well-being of those they serve, either directly or indirectly, often at great personal sacrifice. By providing research of the highest quality and a forum for discussion and debate of these important topics within the

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## A WORD FROM THE NEW EDITORS

*Journal*, we hope to contribute to moving the system in a positive direction. Working with members of this vibrant community will be among the most rewarding aspects of the position.

As we mentioned, our enthusiasm is accompanied by a bit of apprehension, however, stemming from the obvious tensions inherent in the present system. Most importantly, we believe the *Journal* must publish work that is relevant to a wide audience without sacrificing scientific rigor. We envision several ways to meet this challenge. Specifically, we will reach out to the many outstanding investigators working in diverse settings and encourage submissions. We will continue to build a solid base of peer reviewers that consists of accomplished researchers across many relevant fields to screen submissions not just for relevance, but also for scientific merit. Credibility of the *Journal* can only be maintained if the review process is rigorous, timely, and fair.

A specific challenge we must face head on is the increasing prevalence of industry-funded research. Like other journals, we will insist on disclosure of funding sources and solicit reviewers to ensure a critical, but fair evaluation. As academic researchers, neither of us has vested interests in any particular viewpoint; we believe the key to intellectual progress is rigorous science and open debate. We will encourage publication of studies from all perspectives, recognizing that conflicting results generate discussion and, ultimately, can advance the field. Submissions that challenge conventional wisdom (often the most stimulating pieces) are welcome. By adding to the body of knowledge and inviting debates, we aim to substantially improve the status quo.

Fortunately, the *Journal* has many strengths upon which we can build. Sandy Schwartz, who has held the Editor-in-Chief position since the *Journal's* inception, has served as an innovative and effective leader. Over a nearly 7-year period, Sandy and his team developed a diverse and dedicated readership, a strong and growing list of contributing authors, and a superb administrative team. Moreover, we are fortunate to inherit a distinguished group of national experts who provide advice and guidance on a wide array of editorial issues. With this stable foundation in place (thanks, Sandy), our charge is to expand the visibility and reputation of the *Journal*. To do so we hope to continue to build and increase the strong base of support for the *Journal* as we set out to pursue and refine our mission.

We are fortunate to have this opportunity and look forward to working with all of you to make the *Journal* an ever more exciting and stimulating outlet for cutting-edge research, relevant to all stakeholders in the healthcare field. Please let us know if you have specific concerns or suggestions for the *Journal*. We welcome your input.



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