
The logo for Crain's Cleveland Business. It features the word "CRAIN'S" in white, uppercase letters inside a red rectangular box. Below this box, the words "CLEVELAND" and "BUSINESS" are stacked in a large, bold, serif font. "CLEVELAND" is in black, and "BUSINESS" is in red.

Letter to the editor: In praise of ACOs

4:30 am, March 29, 2015

Thank you for the article about Accountable Care Organizations in the March 23 edition of *Crain's*.

ACOs are an innovative model for our community. However, the headline "ACOs aren't as profitable, but are becoming norm in Northeast Ohio," is misleading. Yes - ACOs are often not profitable for a health system in the short-term.

The ACO model is meant to create change and lessen costs to health systems over time by creating efficiencies and collaborations to create a more healthy community. ACOs are designed to save the health system and community significant health care costs over time.

The goal of ACO coordinated care is to ensure that patients get the right care at the right time, while avoiding unnecessary duplication of services and preventing medical errors.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland is part of the ACO model at MetroHealth where a Legal Aid attorney is integrated into the health-care team at MetroHealth's Senior Health and Wellness Center.

On its face, it may seem strange for lawyers to be working alongside doctors. But Legal Aid and MetroHealth are working together to address the social determinants of health.

Living in poverty is unhealthy. Not every illness has a medical remedy and some illnesses can be avoided altogether by addressing issues of poverty.

A family forced to choose between food and heat in the winter months cannot be treated with a prescription or a vaccination.

Similarly, an asthmatic person will never breathe symptom free — no matter how much medication is administered — if he or she returns from the doctor's office to mold-infested housing.

Our attorneys and physicians practice preventive lawyering and medicine to assist patients and their families in successfully addressing some of the social and environmental barriers to good health. This partnership will reduce health disparities in low-income communities. And, as the ACO model encourages, will save the community costs over time.

— Colleen M. Cotter

Executive Director

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

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