

healthcare ads

RECENT
HEALTHCARE ADS
TALK THE TALK.
CAN PROVIDERS
WALK THE WALK?



Recent Healthcare Ads Talk the Talk. Can Practitioners Walk the Walk?

By Scott Norris

Recent healthcare ads paint a rosy picture of partnerships with doctors, coordination of care, advocacy, open lines of communication, and acts of human kindness: all important concepts, but when not backed up with practical application, ring hollow as just the latest healthcare buzzwords. (Sometimes ads are created to distract you from reality.)

Sutter Health's web site says this about their "We + You" campaign: "What would we ever do without partners? At Sutter Health, we

partner with you toward a single goal: providing high-value, quality health care that's more personalized and human. It's how we make health care better. Most of all, it's how we get better, together. See how we're putting partnership into action today."

Kaiser Permanente's ad campaign is called, "Thrive." Kaiser's senior vice president of marketing and Internet services says this about their campaign: "All the way through, we've been emphasizing Kaiser Permanente's role as a total health advocate for our members. That means that commitment to

comprehensive coordinated care with an emphasis on prevention,

*Sometimes ads
are created to
distract you
from reality.*

June



2014

Scott Norris has an MBA from SJSU, a BA in psychology from UCSB, and completed UNM's program in Curriculum & Instruction in Multicultural Teacher Education. Scott is also an artist and brain cancer survivor. His resource, "Factors Influencing Quality of Life for Brain Tumor Survivors: A Practical Tool for Navigating Survivorship" (which contains practical, innovative, and easy to use diagrams that can be taken directly to doctors during appointments to identify and point out areas of concern), is available for download on the About Scott page of scottnorrisartstudio.com. Even though it was written specifically with brain tumor survivors and their caregivers in mind, it can effectively be used by anyone.

To anyone who has spent any significant amount of time fighting their way through the healthcare system (I'm sorry Dignity Health, but patients are already numbers), these ad campaigns are simply that: just ad campaigns. None of them point out the reality that, even in the most ideal circumstances, patients and caregivers are the ones who have to be proactive in forging partnerships with doctors, coordinating care, advocating for themselves, and maintaining open lines of communication.

early detection and great clinical care when people need it."

John Muir Health's campaign, created by their ad agency Duncan/Channon, is titled, "Be Heard." On Duncan/Channon's web site it says the following: "What do people want from their doctors? It starts with a little r-e-s-p-e-c-t. That's what consumers told John Muir Health and, not coincidentally, what John Muir Health has delivered patients for decades. That insight is the basis for a comprehensive new campaign created by Duncan/Channon, JMH's agency of record since July, 2010. The work is designed to reassure consumers, especially the moms who drive family healthcare decisions, that at John Muir Health patients are viewed as partners."

And Dignity Health System's "Hello Humankindness" campaign is based in part (according to their Press Center) on the following premise: "America's health care system is at a genuine inflection point that will take one of two directions over the next couple of years. Providers will either become mega businesses where patients are numbers in the system, or they'll prioritize care over cost and adopt new models to serve patients. Recent primary research conducted by Dignity Health found that what people most want in a health care experience is to be listened to; to be treated as a person, not a patient."

To anyone who has spent any significant amount of time fighting their way through the healthcare

system (I'm sorry Dignity Health, but patients are already numbers), these ad campaigns are simply that: just ad campaigns. None of them point out the reality that, even in the most ideal circumstances, patients and caregivers are the ones who have to be proactive in forging partnerships with doctors, coordinating care, advocating for themselves, and maintaining open lines of communication. And although these campaigns may point out some of the problems within the healthcare system, they fail to offer any practical solutions or identify exactly how each and every provider in each of their systems will be educated in (or even have the time to successfully implement) these grand new approaches to patient care.

The reality, as discussed by PinnacleCare Private Health Advisory, is that pressures and constraints within the healthcare system have not only rendered providers incapable of performing many of their most basic functions, but have also given rise to alternatives outside the system to serve patients in ways the system will no longer allow:

"The United States offers arguably the best healthcare in the world. Paradoxically, many times that does not result in finding and receiving the best care. ...

All of the professionals in our healthcare system struggle under the crushing weight of cost control measures imposed by insurers and

healthcare buzzwords

medical institutions, which force doctors to minimize the time they spend assessing, treating, and discussing options with patients and their families. ...

Due to cost constraints and resource limitations, doctors are not able to spend adequate time with their patients and do not necessarily have



access to information on all available forms of treatment. In addition, when patients see more than one doctor, their care, medical records, and medications are rarely effectively coordinated. The burden of managing treatment most often falls on the shoulders of the patient and family. ...

Fifty years ago, doctors traveled to the homes of their patients, watched as families grew and spent time talking to their patients. Now the average office visit is 11 minutes and physicians may be seeing as many as 40 patients a day.

But there's an exciting new development within the field – the private professional healthcare advocate who is not tied to a single medical institution or network of doctors. ... They manage the entire healthcare process, from collecting medical records from all of the healthcare practitioners a family has seen, to expediting appointments and completing the necessary paperwork, to accompanying patients to appointments."

Since providers barely have time to manage the physical aspects of illness, they perform even worse when addressing the psychosocial and quality of life needs of their patients.

For example, the Institute of Medicine, in its 2007 report brief, "Cancer Care for the Whole Patient: Meeting Psychosocial Health Needs," states, "The failure to address the very real psychosocial health needs of patients and their caregivers is a failure to effectively treat that patient's cancer, plain and simple. ... After all, cancer treatment is intended both to extend life and to improve the patients' quality of life. ... [W]e need our health care professionals to do a better job recognizing a patient's needs and connecting them to the right services – each and every time, for each and every patient."

And a 2009 study by the National Brain Tumor Society (NBTS), "A Needs Assessment of Brain Tumor Patients, Survivors and Loved Ones," parallels the Institute of Medicine report brief when it states, "Many of our findings highlight the need to re-examine what it means to live with a brain tumor diagnosis. The concept of brain tumor survivorship is expanding to include not only quantity of life but also quality of life for people with a brain tumor. ... There is a need for more routine assessments and services that go beyond standard treatment regimes

Due to cost constraints and resource limitations, doctors are not able to spend adequate time with their patients and do not necessarily have access to information on all available forms of treatment.

Now the average office visit is 11 minutes ...

As patients and caregivers, we must use all the tools and resources at our disposal to ensure we get the care we need and deserve. Moreover, we must not be lulled into inaction or a false sense of security by healthcare's latest promises and promotions.

and holistically address the spectrum of cognitive, physical and psychosocial needs of brain tumor survivors."

Having fought brain tumor disease for over a decade, I am painfully aware not only of the shortcomings of our medical system, but also the inability of providers to forge partnerships with patients, caregivers, and other doctors; coordinate and manage the care process; advocate on behalf of their patients; and maintain open lines of communication; etc. (no matter what their systems may promise or promote).

In response to my frustration, I wrote a paper called, "Factors Influencing Quality of Life for Brain Tumor Survivors: A Practical Tool for Navigating Survivorship." In a nutshell, the paper provides practical, innovative, and easy to use diagrams that can be taken directly to doctors during appointments to identify and point out concerns in the areas of communication, social support, coordination of care, access, advocacy, mobility, and inclusion. The diagrams not only help – and make it easy for – survivors and caregivers to focus in on their specific needs, but they also place the onus squarely on their medical team to respond across specialties and institutions with practical ideas, recommendations, and actions to fulfill those needs (something that both the Institute of Medicine and the National Brain Tumor Society

indicate needs to happen more often).

The paper has received great feedback and is available for download on the About Scott page of scottnorrisartstudio.com. Even though it was written specifically with brain tumor survivors and their caregivers in mind, it can effectively be used by anyone.

As patients and caregivers, we must use all the tools and resources at our disposal to ensure we get the care we need and deserve. Moreover, we must not be lulled into inaction or a false sense of security by healthcare's latest promises and promotions.

healthcare buzzwords