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First Person Richard Zoretic

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Richard Zoretic is the new chairman of the board of directors of Eastern Virginia Medical School Health Services



Duties and responsibilities

as chairman

I'm brand-new to the position. My duties are to oversee the board and to manage the board meetings. The focus is to continue to ensure the success and the faculty practices in terms of financial stability and quality of care from a customer service perspective.

Additionally we want to ensure the success and viability of the practice and strengthening the partnership with key health care facilities throughout the region.

Also, EVMS wants to provide a strong faculty and provide medical education for the students and care for the community. We take what we do seriously and it's our job to continue to enhance the reputation of the medical school.

In terms of the current issues, the focus is health care reform and how it will impact us.

Three decades of

health care experience

I have 30 years in the health care industry in the business area. I've been with Amerigroup for seven years. I've done consulting with managed care organizations and provider systems and have worked with physicians, both primary care and specialty levels, and have dealt with business issues as well as clinical issues in my career. Previous to Amerigroup, I was with United Healthcare for six years.

My participation in the health care industry has focused on quality improvement and quality control. My perspective has been of someone on the payer side of things. It's been helpful to physicians now since so much emphasis is on transforming the health care industry in this country.

Health care debate

First of all, health care is such a huge part of the economy. Health care spending represents 15 to 17 percent of gross domestic product. It's an enormous industry. Since costs have been rising rapidly, it represents a national threat.

At the same time there has been quite a bit of data and studies that show the U.S. health care quality is in the middle of the pack if you compare our systems to other industrialized nations. I think we can do better and get a better outcome for the money we spend.

Now that the law has passed and will extend health coverage to more Americans, the focus will still be controlling costs and quality improvement. My focus and position with Amerigroup and EVMS will be on these issues.

Health care reform affecting businesses

It's going to affect different businesses in different ways. It all depends on the size of the companies. Some smaller businesses that don't provide it may need to provide health care at some costs. If not, they may have to pay a penalty under health care reform if they don't do that.

Also, some employers because of health care reform may have to bear additional costs that they didn't have in the past. Larger employers may continue to do what they have been doing. I do know that larger employers will look at the possibility of having employees seek benefits through the health exchange that will be offered.

It might be better for them to get benefits through the exchange than offer it to employees. Not everyone will be affected equally.

Staying motivated

in this industry

It's an exciting business because it's always changing. Constantly, people talk about how the health care industry in this country is very dynamic especially now because of health care reform. At Amerigroup we will play a central role in health care reform and we're getting prepared for that.

I joke with my staff that we could be in a different business that is less meaningful, but I'm grateful we're in an industry that matters to society. nib

Calendar of Events

October 2010						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

[See all events](#)