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How innovation bends the cost curve in today's healthcare landscape

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The healthcare landscape continues to be challenging for hospitals and health systems, especially regarding the cost of care. Operational spend is on the rise, reimbursements are declining, and margins have never been tighter.

But adversity also brings opportunity. Dr. Theo Koury, the president of Vituity, experienced firsthand this year how clinical integration, operational efficiency, and technological innovation can help reduce operating costs — resulting in a reduction of \$15 million in spending.

While healthcare organizations may be hesitant to invest in new processes, tools, and care delivery models, Dr. Koury illustrates three innovative ways healthcare organizations can bend the cost curve when margins are tight.

1. Create a unified team

“Many healthcare organizations still see themselves as a collection of departments rather than a cohesive whole,” Dr. Koury says. “But in order to bend the cost curve, you must improve efficiency and reduce waste by integrating your organization’s clinical services.”

For example, Vituity’s operations consultants used to work primarily with a single, specific practice line (emergency medicine, anesthesiology, etc.). Recognizing this limited their ability to address complex systemic issues, Vituity cross-trained the consultants on *all* practice lines.

“Now when our consultants go into a hospital, they’re able to see the big picture,” Dr. Koury says. “They can quickly identify and address common barriers to patient flow. They can also process-engineer care transitions between departments to make them more efficient and integrated.”

***Takeaway:** Look for opportunities to break down silos and get your departments working together on organization-wide issues.*

2. Invest in infrastructure

Technology continues to change healthcare, yet many organizations use outdated electronic health records (EHR), payroll and billing services, and other systems that are over 10 years old.

“Think about what your life would be like with a 10-year-old cell phone,” says Dr. Koury. “Then consider how those same issues could be holding your business back.”

When choosing where to invest, the collection, management, and analysis of data is a smart choice. “Investments in your data infrastructure will often pay for themselves in the form of operational efficiency and process optimization,” Dr. Koury says.

Vituity was able to use its data infrastructure to create analytic tools of value to hospitals, providing length of stay (LOS) and other performance analytics to improve outcomes and patient satisfaction.

***Takeaway:** When it comes to infrastructure upgrades, ROI isn’t just about dollars saved and earned, it’s more about building scalability through technology and process redesign.*

3. Maintain your values and culture

“Having a great organizational culture is key to surviving challenging times,” Dr. Koury says. “Culture allows you to recruit the best providers during workforce shortages. It also communicates genuine care and concern for patients, which is increasingly important in this age of online reviews.”

A strong culture can also create new business opportunities by attracting like-minded organizations — both traditional and nontraditional — to your orbit. Currently, Vituity’s transformation team is meeting with a world-renowned technology company about opportunities for partnership. “These conversations only came about because Vituity and some of the leading tech companies share many of the same values around innovation and patient care,” Dr. Koury says.

***Takeaway:** Continued success is dependent on internal values and a shared mission and vision.*

In closing, the challenges facing healthcare organizations are varied, but surmountable. Many hospital leaders see cutting costs and investing in innovation as mutually exclusive. However, adversity often creates opportunity for innovators and pioneers. “Market turbulence is an opportunity to transform your organization,” Dr. Koury says. “But it’s also your opportunity to be the innovative disrupter.”

About Vituity

Dr. Theo Koury is the president of Vituity. Before his appointment in 2017, he served as Vituity’s Chief Operations Officer. Since joining the Partnership in 1997, he has also held the roles of medical director, regional director and vice president, and has served on the Board of Directors.

As a physician-led and -owned, multispecialty partnership, Vituity has driven positive change in the business and practice of healthcare for nearly 50 years. Our 3,000 doctors and clinicians provide compassionate, integrated acute care across the country, serving over 6.3 million patients annually.

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