

Reinvest in Health

The United States health care system is the most costly in the World, yet it underperforms on key health metrics, including life expectancy.

As 20 million people have gained access to care since 2010, the health care delivery system has been further strained without the appropriate investments in necessary innovation, research, and care delivery capabilities.

Uneven provider distribution and shortages impede effective health care delivery that can save or improve patients' lives and reduce the burden of acute and chronic diseases. By 2020, there will be an estimated shortage of over 20,000 primary care physicians.

Barriers to leveraging and exchanging standardized data hamper the health system's ability to drive continuous improvements and innovations in medical research and care delivery.

Collectively, these gaps in resources and capabilities are inhibiting Americans from accessing more effective treatments and interventions to improve their health and well-being.

In recent years, investment has decreased in medical and health services research and development, social services, and prevention efforts. Specifically, the U.S. share of global medical research funding declined from 57% in 2004 to 44% in 2011.

Meanwhile, the prevalence and costs of chronic diseases continue to grow, underlying 7 of 10 deaths annually. More than 141 million Americans live with a chronic condition such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, or asthma and that number is expected to climb to 171 million by 2030. The targeted use of evidence-based prevention – including screenings, immunizations, and lifestyle interventions – can improve health and productivity.

To ensure the U.S. health care system is the most modern, innovative, and effective in the World will require targeted investments that seek to develop a next-generation health workforce, accelerate medical and health services research, emphasize prevention, and leverage actionable data. As outlined in the following solutions, reinvestment in health should promote innovations in science and technology to reduce health care costs, expand access to high-quality care, develop new cures, and improve the health of all Americans.

Create a 21st Century Health Workforce

Meeting the complex care needs of an increasingly diverse population in a rapidly evolving delivery system requires sufficient resources, as well as policies, aimed at attracting, training, equipping, and effectively deploying primary care providers and other health care professionals in high demand to modernize and improve the effectiveness of the U.S. health care system. Specific solutions include:

- **Rewarding providers for high-quality care** by leveraging value-based payments that emphasize primary care and prevention, to attract and retain primary care providers and other health professionals in high demand.
- **Funding recruiting, loan forgiveness, and other incentive programs** in underserved areas and specialties to foster local, culturally-competent talent and redistribute existing clinician capacity.
- **Aligning scope of practice guidelines for nurse practitioners and other clinicians to the highest level** accepted across the Nation to attract and effectively deploy clinicians and expand delivery system capacity.
- **Expanding the capacities of medical education programs and eliminating unnecessary barriers and regulatory constraints to the practice of medicine**, including credentialing and malpractice laws, to increase and optimize clinician capacity.
- **Financing curriculum modernization for medical schools and other clinical and health administration programs to train the workforce** to effectively address factors driving patients' health and outcomes and support delivery system transformation. Training should include:
 - Team-based and technology-enabled care delivery;
 - Hands-on training in non-hospital and community-based settings;
 - Work with community health workers and community-based organizations;
 - Integrating mental and behavioral health into primary care delivery; and
 - Awareness of cultural differences that impact health and outcomes.

Enable a Data-Driven, Interoperable Health Care System

A modern, connected, informed, and effective health care system requires access to secure, actionable data when and where it matters most to enable continuous improvement and innovation. Realizing the full potential of data can be achieved by:

- **Accelerating and achieving interoperability through rapid development and implementation of common, streamlined data standards, reflecting private-sector capabilities**, to leverage investments from Meaningful Use and enable seamless, secure, and timely electronic information exchange for improving clinical care, the consumer experience, and productivity of health care resources.
- **Advancing the adoption of health information exchange capabilities by incentivizing the use of open architectures, connected databases, and common patient identifiers** to securely share actionable data and more easily combine data sets for deeper clinical insights.
- **Prohibiting data blocking – which impedes seamless information exchange between providers, payers, and consumers** – by defining and enforcing meaningful penalties, including those outlined in the 21st Century Cures Act.
- **Incentivizing all care settings to electronically collect and share data with providers, payers, and consumers** to enable personalized and coordinated care plans and treatments.
- **Funding public-private partnerships focused on expanding access to, and use of, Federal and State government health care data**, thereby advancing innovation, developing evidence-based treatments, and improving patient outcomes.

Invest in Medical and Health Services Research and Innovation

Identifying, promoting, and advancing new and more precise cures and interventions will improve outcomes, prevent diseases, and reduce public health risks. Accelerating such medical and health services innovation in the U.S. will require Federal Agencies to enhance their capabilities to complement and support private-sector research by:

- Advancing efforts at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to **accelerate innovation and adapt to rapid changes in science**. Key initiatives should include expanding existing research and development (R&D) programs, developing new research platforms to share pre-competitive research to improve R&D productivity, and ensuring balanced resource allocation between basic science and condition-specific research programs.
- Leveraging the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) resources to **accelerate safe and timely access to new drugs and devices including generic and second-to-market equivalents**. Key initiatives should include analyzing post-market drug outcomes data to identify new and targeted uses for existing drugs, streamlining generic drug review programs, and developing a national device evaluation and surveillance system.
- Directing Centers for Disease Control (CDC) funding to **expand prevention research and enable timely diagnosis and response to public health threats**. Key initiatives should include analyzing patient data to identify more precise prevention and treatment protocols, developing surveillance tools to proactively detect emerging health risks, and ensuring appropriate resources to respond to outbreaks and epidemics.
- Preserving Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality (AHRQ) funding to **continue its mission of developing care standards to improve health care quality and patient safety**. Key initiatives should include accelerating translation of evidence into diagnostic and clinical guidelines, expanding comparative effectiveness research to support value-based care delivery, and tracking and analyzing the impact of new treatments on patient safety.

Prioritize Prevention

Preventing or delaying the onset of chronic conditions would improve the health of Americans while lowering overall health care costs. Improving outcomes requires both an increased adoption of evidence-based preventive services and targeted investments to address key determinants of health, including social and environmental factors. Specific solutions include:

- **Authorizing flexibility and removing restrictive caps on incentive designs to support consumers seeking preventive services**, to prevent, identify, and manage disease earlier.
- **Increasing investment in Federal and private-sector led R&D of data tools to identify and develop new, effective prevention programs** that are personalized for age, gender, and condition, and targeted in areas with greatest clinical and social burden.
- **Ensuring prevention resources and wellness initiatives are designated as quality improvement activities**, not administrative costs, to drive widespread adoption of evidence-based programs.
- **Amending the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) scoring methodology** to reflect the initial investments, as well as the long-term outcomes and resultant budget savings, of successful prevention programs.
- **Funding proven, evidence-based lifestyle intervention programs and community-based activities** that prevent the on-set of chronic disease.

At UnitedHealth Group, we help solve the world's health care challenges and improve health care for all – care recipients, providers and payers alike. This is achieved through two distinct business platforms: UnitedHealthcare, a health care benefits company, and Optum, a health services and innovation company. Collectively, these distinct yet connected capabilities allow us to improve access to care, achieve higher quality care, reduce costs, increase transparency, and ultimately produce superior health outcomes. This commitment to innovation and momentum for change inspire the women and men of UnitedHealth Group to continuously help people live healthier lives and make the health system work better for all.

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