

More Than Matters of the Moment

By Dr. Jay Mendell and
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A new health care management group takes aim at long range issues.

In strategy making, attention to the emergency of the moment often prevents action on important long range issues. Action on issues may be deferred for the moment, sometimes deferred for moment after moment after moment, and never attended to simply because businesses are so busy coping with the urgent that they never get around to dealing with the important.

Health care management is an example of a field plagued by an oversupply of urgencies and an undersupply of action -action on factors that will transform and restructure the field. Health administrators are being crushed by federally-dictated cost-cutting regulations, and physicians are seemingly being attacked by lawyers, on one hand, and the public on the other. These are the painful distractions that prevent action on other issues that history may record as more important.

New technologies are appearing (robotics and artificial intelligence) that promise to dramatically cut costs.

The U.S. population is aging, and Broward's ethnic character is being altered by migration and the influx of non-English speaking patients.

The educational system is sputtering and may not be a reliable source of doctors, nurses, administrators and technicians. And, the supply rate may not match the demand rate.

To make the important effectively keep stride with the urgent usually requires the dedicated persistence of an activist, or issues champions, who will:

- explain why some opportunity must be exploited without delay;
- calculate and communicate the benefits that will be lost by failing to

act on opportunity;

- furnish enough information to convince reasonable people that action can advantageously be taken at once;
- explain in detail what must be done
- to exploit the opportunity; and;
- do as much work as possible to make subsequent action easy for others.

In collaboration with Broward Community College, the Silicon Beach Consultancy the Health Care System Issues Management Group has been set up to achieve just such goals.

The Issues Management Group is organized by the college and the Consultancy with support from such participating organizations as Pemroke Pines Hospital, the Visiting Nurses Association, the North Broward Hospital District, Holy Cross Hospital, Health America, AvMed, and the Broward County Health Department.

Today; the Issues Management Group

is small, but it is sustained by a number of health care professionals who take an interest in shaping their futures, it will thrive.

Information on fields of interest to the membership is being collected, and meetings on robotics and the immigration of non-English speaking people into Broward have been scheduled.

The objective is to provide members with exactly the information they will need to decide how they can advantageously act on leading edge issues.

In the case of robotics in the health care system, a briefing has been held covering:

- What today's industrial robots look like and what they do.
- How robots are being used today in the health care system. (The Jewish Home and Hospital in Miami is experimenting with a food service robot prototype and the Japanese are already using robots in hospitals.)
- What robots may be expected to do in one year, three years, and five years. Will they be able to see, talk, and navigate in a hospital?
- Where might robots have most favorable application in Broward hospitals-in the kitchens? the laundry rooms? the operating rooms?
- In dollars and manpower, what savings can be achieved by robotization?
- What will it cost to buy and maintain robots?
- How can non-engineers (administrators and board members) analyze the technical and economic factors.

Health care is experiencing a major transformation, and hospitals will not remain unchanged. By examining the transformative technologies and demographics, the Health Care Systems Issues Management Group hopes to provide the best use of lead time required to benefit by change.

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