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Fiscal management and health care innovation are recognized
Oregon Health Forum honors CareOregon CEO

President and CEO David Ford has played a pivotal role in CareOregon's emergence as a leader in innovative health care delivery in Oregon. For that reason, he is among the health care leaders to be honored by the Oregon Health Forum December 5.



The nonprofit health policy organization will present a Visionary Leadership Award to Ford.

Also to be recognized at the 2007 Leadership Awards Dinner are Peter Kohler, MD, president emeritus of Oregon Health & Science University, and Tina Castañares, MD, family physician at La Clínica del Cariña and medical director for Hospice of The Gorge.

Ford was honored for his direction of CareOregon, which he has led since 2003. Under his direction, CareOregon has become an engaged player in efforts to improve health care delivery in the state.

"We've really just followed the vision of the CareOregon board, which wanted to provide high-quality care, not just quality care, to Medicaid members," Ford says.

Achieving that vision means overcoming the inefficiency of the current health care system.

"As a nation, we have a system that's fragmented, inefficient, ineffective and not customer oriented," Ford says. "And despite the fact that people get well sometimes, it causes a lot of problems."

Under Ford's leadership, CareOregon's efforts include promoting team-based, proactive care that integrates case managers, medical assistants and behavioral health within primary care.

CareOregon's CareSupport Unit uses this approach to provide chronic and complex care management for members with diagnoses and procedures that foretell a high risk of needing crisis care. CareSupport teams include nurses, behavioral health specialists, pharmacists and Health Care Guides, who help members find the community resources they need, such shelter, clothing and food. This whole-person approach helps members adhere to their doctors' treatment plans and maintain their health to avoid crisis care.

Through its Care Support and System Innovation (CSSI) Program, CareOregon is assisting clinics in its network innovate and improve. This year, six partner clinics have launched "Primary Care Renewal" pilot projects to remake primary care clinics into team-based, holistic "medical homes."

CareOregon supports these efforts financially, with training in the techniques of quality improvement and continuous improvement.

"We think there is tremendous hope for improvement," Ford says. "That's the whole reason we're doing it.

"We're excited about the capacity of doctors to adapt, change practices, learn from each other, and practice medicine by looking at comprehensive needs.

"When people learn these techniques, the acceleration of learning is exciting," Ford says. "When they see they can make changes for the better, they see more opportunities to make improvements. It takes on a life of its own."

About David Ford

Dave has been in health insurance leadership roles for more than 20 years.

Currently CEO of CareOregon, the largest Medicaid Health Plan in Oregon, Dave has helped evolve and transform the care model of the company. Under his leadership, the Primary Care Renewal and Care Support and System Innovation (CSSI) programs were created to test innovative ways to build quality and deliver primary care in several clinic sites.

Before joining CareOregon in 2003, he worked as an executive with Aetna, NYLCare, and Blue Cross of Washington and Alaska. Most recently, he completed a turnaround for an HMO in Washington DC and Baltimore. He has also worked with a Venture Capital firm in Palo Alto.

Dave is married to photographer/writer, Phi Ford, and has three grown children. He attended the University of California, Davis.

About CareOregon

CareOregon is committed to improving and protecting the health of low income and vulnerable Oregonians. The not-for-profit organization is dedicated to providing access to high quality, cost-effective, culturally competent care for members and supporting the providers who care for them.

For more information about CareOregon, visit www.careoregon.org

For information on the Oregon Health Forum leadership awards, visit <http://www.healthforum.org/events/leadershipdinner.html>

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