



Top 10 athenaInsight stories of 2017

By Gale Pryor | December 26, 2017

We thought 2016 was a challenging year for healthcare. Then came 2017.

Over the tumultuous past 12 months, athenaInsight has covered the twists and turns of payment reform, population health, and consolidating systems in the transformation of U.S. healthcare. We have traced the evolving roles of providers, staff, and patients, and analyzed our unique data set from the athenahealth network of more than 100,000 providers.

The result is timely reporting on the insights and innovations that help healthcare leaders reduce physician burnout, engage staff, improve clinical outcomes, and boost financial performance in organizations of all sizes.

Here are our top stories from 2017 – which cover the issues mostly likely to influence healthcare trends and performance in 2018, too:

1. Decoding Healthcare podcast

Hosted by athenahealth's chief medical officer Kevin Ban, M.D. and journalist Joanna Weiss, Decoding

Healthcare takes a deep dive into population health in its first season.

Hear from Rob Fields, medical director of Mission Health ACO on expanding care teams; Julie Beitsch, Dignity Health's VP of population health, on building clinically integrated networks; Saichin Jain, M.D., CEO of CareMore and an architect of the ACA, on innovations in chronic care; Paul Levy, former CEO of Beth Israel Deaconess, with a reality check on payment reform; and Kevin Hoppe, COO at the Lahey Clinical Performance ACO, on putting pop health into practice.

Decoding Healthcare brings you ear-to-ear with some of the most insightful thought leaders in the industry. Subscribe now, and stay tuned for Season Two, debuting in early 2018.

2. The no-excuses way to manage healthcare growth

What do Starbucks and many health systems have in common? Growing pains. Organizations that grow and become geographically dispersed

see increasingly variable performance among their customer-facing operations, warns Len Schlesinger, Baker Foundation Professor at Harvard Business School.

Leaders must ask how to improve the performance of all facilities, says Schlesinger, former vice chairman and chief operating officer of L. Brands. His solution: “peer-based improvement,” a proven system of bottom-up performance that works as well in healthcare as it does at Starbucks.

3. The high-performing physician network

In the shift of healthcare delivery from hospitals to outpatient care, why are some organizations succeeding while others struggle? athenahealth’s performance researchers analyzed financial and clinical data from across its network of more than 100,000 providers to determine what factors make a difference in driving quality and achieving financial success. Learn the one key to top performance, and explore how your own organization compares to benchmarks in our interactive data visualization: How 3 variables impact financial performance.

4. Community networks save lives: 5 steps to improve the health of a city

Research out of the University of Kentucky identifies the single most powerful tool in reducing mortality rates from preventable disease: a dense network of community collaborators. In Trenton, New Jersey, a pioneering collaborative – comprising hospitals, an FQHC, and city government – coordinates care of high utilizers, partners with community organizations to address the upstream causes of poor health, and improves the health of an entire city. Here’s how they’re doing it, in five evidence-based steps.

5. When all health breaks loose: Delivering primary care in natural disasters

Hurricanes. Floods. Wildfires. 2017 was a calamitous year for weather as well as healthcare. But organizations on the athenahealth network found ways to ensure their patients had access to care, no matter what was going on outside. Here’s how VillageMD kept its primary care patients calm and informed and how Advanced Diagnostics Hospital and Clinic System kept its surgery center open throughout the flooding of Houston.

6. A playbook for population health: 5 insights from healthcare leaders

How can healthcare leaders coach their hospitals and providers on the new playing field of risk-based care? In 2017, we asked more than 100 healthcare executives that question. Gathered at athenahealth for candid roundtable conversations with Harvard Business School professors Amy Edmondson and Nancy Koehn, they shared the challenges of managing population health – and concurred on five steps every organization must take to succeed.

7. Are male patients comfortable with female doctors?

This one surprised us. Data from the athenahealth network reveals that male patients are less likely to return for a follow-up visit when their physician is female. Even more surprising was the response of our readers: An outpouring of frank comments, particularly about how male patients feel when a female chaperone joins their female doctor in the exam room. As more than half of new medical students are now women, helping men feel more comfortable with medical care by women – and the question of chaperones – is an increasingly urgent issue for healthcare organizations.

8. Physician burnout is real. Here's how to fix it

Across a range of service industries, a single measurement of employees' perceptions of their jobs can predict their performance. Called "capability," it gauges whether employees have the latitude, resources, and support they need to service their customers – and athenahealth research reveals that it applies to physicians, too. Diane Shannon, M.D., author of *Preventing Physician Burnout: Curing the Chaos and Returning Joy to the Practice of Medicine*, considers what leaders can do to increase capability and reduce burnout. Her advice comes not a moment too soon, because millennial doctors are pushing back against the causes of burnout in healthcare.

9. A physician incentive system that works

In this 3-minute case study – our popular series of proven tactics from leading healthcare organizations – Arizona Care Network, an ACO of 5,000 primary care doctors, needed an incentive program to meet quality measures. Find out in three minutes or less how this organization designed a program that its doctors supported – and not just because of the quarterly pool of \$500,000 in bonuses.

10. Ebook: Optimizing quality documentation

Learn from top-performing healthcare organizations how to empower staff to take on quality reporting and improve patient outcomes while wicking work away from physicians. Here are all the evidence-based tips and tricks of documenting quality metrics in one easy-to-use, easy-to-share ebook.

Want to keep up with what's promising to be a turbulent year ahead in healthcare? Bookmark athenainsight.com and come back often. And here's to a happy, healthy 2018.

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