

HEALTH CARE

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION



CAMILLE APPLIN-JONES,
MBA, BSN, FACHE

Senior Vice President; Area Manager
Kaiser Permanente Panorama City
Medical Center & Antelope Valley



EDWARD MIRZABEGIAN, MHA

Chief Executive Officer
Antelope Valley Medical Center



MURTAZA SANWARI

Senior Vice President; Area Manager
Kaiser Permanente Woodland Hills
Medical Center & West Ventura



JOHNESE SPISSO

President, UCLA Health;
CEO, UCLA Hospital System;
Associate Vice Chancellor,
UCLA Health Sciences



The health care industry as a whole continues to generate creative solutions to the changing needs of the Southern California population over the last few years, and has made new enhancements, innovations and adjustments to protocols, all while providing services that are the most essential to those in need.

To explore the future of health-related issues, our Inside the Valley team has discussed insights, suggestions and best practices with four health care experts and thought leaders from the region.



TECHNOLOGIES SUCH AS VIRTUAL CARE, REMOTE MONITORING, AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ARE HELPING US EXTEND CARE BEYOND TRADITIONAL SETTINGS.

—CAMILLE APPLIN-JONES

What is your outlook for the future of the health care system – this year and beyond?

SPISSO: The health care industry is undergoing rapid transformation driven by advances in technology, financial pressures, and evolving workforce and patient expectations. Patients increasingly are looking for convenient access to care and more personalized treatment tailored to their individual needs. At the same time, emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, are creating new efficiencies and enhancing the quality and safety of care delivery. Rising health care costs will remain a critical area of focus, requiring health systems to balance affordability with innovation and access. At UCLA Health, we are addressing this by implementing strategies to reduce costs while improving the overall value of care.

How does California's health care outlook differ from other parts of the country?

MIRZABEGIAN: The health care outlook in California really stands apart from the rest of the country. For one, our size alone creates cost pressures that smaller states just don't face. With more than 39 million people, we're caring for an incredibly diverse population with wide-ranging needs and socioeconomic factors. On top of that, California runs one of the largest Medicaid programs in the nation, and when you add Covered California into the mix, these programs have a huge



influence on how hospitals operate and how patients access care. Medi-Cal continues to be a major influence on rising costs simply because so many people rely on it. Policy and state budgets also make managing health care in California more complex every year. In recent years, the health care worker's minimum wage increases, and the looming seismic safety compliance requirements are also leaving a financial impact on California's health care industry.

How is consumerism impacting the health care industry and how are hospitals and health systems responding?

SANWARI: Health care consumerism is reshaping the industry, as consumers increasingly seek convenience, transparency and high-quality experiences. Hospitals and health systems are adopting new strategies to meet these expectations and remain competitive. Patients today are more empowered, seeking information and actively making decisions about their care. Kaiser Permanente ensures that members are partners in managing their health, providing easy access to their medical information, appointments, prescriptions and provider communication through our online platform as well as digital options such as online scheduling, telehealth, and mobile health

tools. Kaiser Permanente alleviates the obstacle of fragmented care through its integrated model which offers a seamless, high-quality patient care experience, meeting consumer desire to easily navigate the health care system. As consumer focus shifts to wellness, Kaiser Permanente leads in proactive care, prevention, and early detection. This approach emphasizes healthy lifestyles, meeting the expectations of health care consumers who seek both value and quality.

When you look at all the innovation happening within the health care industry today, what trends are you most optimistic about?



PATIENTS INCREASINGLY ARE LOOKING FOR CONVENIENT ACCESS TO CARE AND MORE PERSONALIZED TREATMENT TAILORED TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.

—JOHNESE SPISSO

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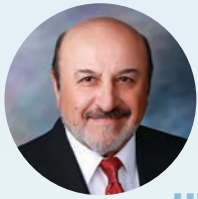


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IN RECENT YEARS, THE HEALTH CARE WORKER'S MINIMUM WAGE INCREASES, AND THE LOOMING SEISMIC SAFETY COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS ARE LEAVING A FINANCIAL IMPACT ON CALIFORNIA'S HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY.

—EDWARD MIRZABEGIAN

APPLIN-JONES: I'm most optimistic about innovation that brings care closer, earlier and smarter. Technologies such as virtual care, remote monitoring, and artificial intelligence are helping us extend care beyond traditional settings. Not to replace clinicians, but to support better, faster and more informed decision-making. At the same time, there's renewed momentum around primary care transformation, which is critical as we manage a more complex, aging population. And underlying it all is data integration—finally giving us the ability to see the whole patient and design care around their needs. But the real opportunity isn't the technology itself—it's how we use it to redesign the system. Because again, the system will continue to produce the results it was built for—unless we intentionally build something better.

SPISSO: Health care is becoming more predictive, personalized and proactive and UCLA Health is at the forefront of that research and care delivery. For example, CRISPR represents one of the most exciting advances in modern medicine, with the potential to treat and sometimes even cure diseases at its genetic source. By enabling precise editing of DNA, CRISPR is opening the door to new therapies for conditions such as Sickle cell disease and other inherited disorders that have historically required lifelong management. At UCLA Health, these types of

innovations align closely with our commitment to advancing precision medicine and translating groundbreaking research into real-world patient care. As part of a leading academic health system, we are focused on bringing forward next-generation therapies, expanding access to clinical trials, and helping shape the future of personalized, gene-based treatments that can improve outcomes for patients across our communities.

What should patients take into consideration when selecting their care providers and hospitals?

MIRZABEGIAN: Unfortunately, many of the decisions about which doctors or hospitals patients can use are primarily made by insurance companies. That's why it's important for patients to look closely at insurance networks before enrollment and determine which hospitals are in-network. If patients already have a doctor or specialist they like, it's always a good idea to ask which insurance plans they accept so they can keep seeing them. When it comes to choosing hospitals, patients actually have more control than they think. Patients can look at which hospitals are included in each insurance plan, check whether they offer the services or specialties they may need, and consider their distance from home—especially for emergencies. Doing your own research upfront can make a big difference in cost and access.

How are rising health insurance premiums impacting your organization, patients, or employer clients—and what solutions are being explored to control costs?

SANWARI: Kaiser Permanente is addressing the rising expense of health care through a delivery model which reduces costs while improving quality. Our integrated care approach brings services together within a single system, reducing inefficiencies and maintaining affordability, while also making care more accessible. Our emphasis on preventive care and management of chronic conditions enables earlier diagnosis, reduces emer-

gency room visits and hospitalizations, and limits complications. This keeps the focus on patient care and achieving better outcomes, while controlling medical costs for members. Kaiser Permanente's use of advanced data tools to provide clarity on health care spending results in a data-driven approach enabling employers to make informed decisions about health benefits, ensuring that spending is appropriate and benefits employees. While there is no single solution to the ongoing rise in health care costs these strategies support the delivery of high-quality care at lower costs, benefiting both patients and the entire health care system.

What are some evolving best practices in terms of prevention and early diagnosis as ways of stopping serious illness?

SPISSO: At UCLA Health and in the health care industry, we will see a continued focus on population health management. This includes analyzing and addressing the factors that influence the health of a whole population, including social, environmental and behavioral determinants, with the aim of preventing disease and promoting wellness at a community level. Socioeconomic and environmental factors significantly influence up to 80% of health outcomes, highlighting their critical role in our patients' overall well-being. UCLA Health has undertaken



HEALTH CARE CONSUMERISM IS RESHAPING THE INDUSTRY, AS CONSUMERS INCREASINGLY SEEK CONVENIENCE, TRANSPARENCY AND HIGH-QUALITY EXPERIENCES.

—MURTAZA SANWARI



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CONTINUE
TO BE AN**

**INCREASED DEMAND FOR
OUTPATIENT CARE, DRIVEN
BY PATIENT PREFERENCE FOR
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OUTSIDE OF HOSPITALS.**

—JOHNE SPISSO

several strategies to improve population health, including screening our patients in the domains of food needs, transportation, financial strain, prescription and medical bills, housing, intimate partner violence, and utilities needs and working to connect them with needed resources.

What's one strategic initiative your organization is focused on over the next few years to stay ahead?

MIRZABEGIAN: Although we have several strategic initiatives underway, with the current political and health care climate, it requires us to focus on maintaining and strengthening a financially viable



organization over the next few years. As a safety-net hospital, our community depends on us, and long-term stability is essential to ensuring patients continue to have access to quality care close to home. However, financial viability does not mean cutting corners. Instead, it means making thoughtful, mission-driven decisions that allow us to invest in updating facilities, attracting and retaining skilled clinicians, and meeting the growing needs of the Antelope Valley. We are identifying innovative ways to improve efficiency, enhance operations, and maintain essential services while elevating the patient experience. Like many hospitals across the nation, we face these challenges with a commitment to stewardship and sustainability.

How are organizations successfully implementing value-based delivery to reduce the cost of care while also improving quality?

APPLIN-JONES: The organizations that are making real progress in value-based care understand a simple truth: the system is perfectly designed to deliver the results it gets. So, they redesign it. That work begins with aligning incentives across the entire continuum of care—not just between payer and provider, but every touchpoint in the care experience. It also means investing upstream in primary care and chronic disease management, where we can meaningfully change the trajectory of health rather than simply respond when it declines. Equally important is integrated data—so we're managing people holistically, not isolated episodes of care. As a nurse, I've seen the consequences when we intervene too late. As an executive, I know we have the ability to change that. Value-based care allows us to do both—deliver better outcomes and lower cost—by design.

What can the health care sector do to prepare for a potential future crisis such as another pandemic scenario?

MIRZABEGIAN: Hospitals are built to be resilient systems, especially for emer-

gencies, disasters, or unexpected events like the COVID pandemic. Besides having the right equipment, personnel and resources, the health care sector also needs to stay focused on being flexible and better connected. When crises occur, hospitals must be able to quickly scale up—whether that means expanding bed space, keeping critical supplies on hand or calling in additional resources. It also helps to support and train staff regularly, so everyone feels confident jumping into emergency roles when things get hectic. Similarly, with multiple agencies playing key roles in emergency scenarios, it's important to know and stay connected with those that can assist in a crisis, that means your local fire department, law enforcement, public health departments, and city emergency teams, etc. It's essential to share information in real time, so responses become faster and efforts are more coordinated to get the job done.

How are health organizations leveraging AI or data analytics to improve patient outcomes, streamline operations, or personalize care?

SANWARI: Health organizations are increasingly utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) to revolutionize patient care. Kaiser Permanente has implemented the Abridge system, an AI-powered scribe solution to streamline medical documentation and enhance doctor-patient interactions. With



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WHILE AI IS A VALUABLE ASSISTANT,

IT CANNOT REPLACE THE EXPERTISE AND EMPATHY OF PHYSICIANS AS IT LACKS ABILITY TO INTERPRET SUBTLE HUMAN EMOTIONS OR PROVIDE COMPASSIONATE CARE DURING CRITICAL MOMENTS.

—MURTAZA SANWARI

patient consent, physicians record consultations, allowing them to focus on patients rather than typing notes during visits. Importantly, while AI supports documentation, clinical decision-making remains firmly with the physician. We have also introduced the Intelligent Navigator system, enabling patients to share symptoms through a user-friendly app, which assesses urgency by analyzing patient-reported symptoms in real time. If a critical issue is detected, the patient is directed to the hospital or most appropriate level of care, ensuring timely intervention. While AI is a valuable assistant, it cannot replace the expertise and empathy of physicians as it lacks ability to interpret subtle human emotions or provide compassionate care during critical moments. As organizations continue to explore how AI can improve clinical practice, the irreplaceable human connection will remain essential.

Will outpatient care continue to trend upwards? Why or why not?

SPISSO: There will continue to be an increased demand for outpatient care,

driven by patient preference for convenient, accessible care and technological advancements allowing for more procedures outside of hospitals. At UCLA Health, we are committed to increasing access to high-quality health care. UCLA Health provides comprehensive primary and specialty care, along with top-tier hospital services, to residents along the Central Coast and Southern California, with nearly 300 clinic locations and five hospitals. In 2024 we opened UCLA West Valley Medical, which added 260 beds, seven operating rooms, an ambulatory surgery center and the UCLA Health Regional Burn Center to our network of hospitals and community clinics. Later this year, we will open the UCLA Resnick Mental Health Campus which will dramatically increase access to care, strengthen community-based services, and advance research and innovation to address the growing mental health crisis in our community.

What investments have made the biggest impact on improving patient satisfaction in recent years?

MIRZABEGIAN: As the largest acute care provider in the region, our focus is keeping high-quality specialty care close to home. That means continually investing in the technology, services and people who make the patient experience better. Improving satisfaction starts with better outcomes and a supportive, patient-centered environment. For example, we've embraced AI in our radiology department to shorten MRI times, making the process faster and more comfortable. We've also invested in advanced surgical robotics, allowing us to offer minimally invasive procedures that reduce pain, recovery time, and shorten hospital stays. Convenience and accessibility are also important, which is why we opened an outpatient pharmacy. Human connection strongly remains at the heart of great

care, so we've expanded our Patient Experience team to provide more support, quicker responses, and compassionate guidance. These innovations not only improve health results but help patients feel confident in the care they receive right here in our community.

What's one change you believe hospitals or providers must make now to stay competitive or relevant in the future?

APPLIN-JONES: We have to stop designing health care around the hospital—especially as we face a rapidly aging population with increasing clinical complexity. Hospitals will always be essential, but they can no longer be the center of the system. The future belongs to organizations that can care for people beyond their walls—through strong primary care, virtual access, and seamless coordination across the continuum. That requires a fundamental mindset shift. Success is no longer how full your beds are—it's measured by how effectively you keep people healthy and out of them. From the bedside to the boardroom, I've seen that the most meaningful care happens before a patient ever reaches the hospital. As our population ages, that work becomes even more critical—and more urgent.



HOSPITALS ARE BUILT TO BE RESILIENT SYSTEMS, ESPECIALLY FOR EMERGENCIES, DISASTERS, OR UNEXPECTED EVENTS LIKE THE COVID PANDEMIC.

—EDWARD MIRZABEGIAN

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EconomicAlliance.org

Info@EconomicAlliance.org

(818) 379-7000