

Community partnerships with HPSJ improving healthcare in region

Health Plan of San Joaquin is starting this fresh new year with publication of our 2017 Community Report. In it, we wrap up the year just passed, while looking eagerly ahead to see how we will meet some lingering Central Valley economic challenges to healthcare for our members and community. We also highlight some of the opportunities already underway, thanks to HPSJ collaborations with local partners.



**Community
Voices**

**Lakshmi
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First, a little about Health Plan of San Joaquin: It is the major, not-for-profit, managed care, public health plan in San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties, serving almost 350,000 members who are mostly working families and children, as well as seniors and disabled residents.

Through the collaborative business model that we've pioneered since our start in 1996, HPSJ operates at increasing levels of efficiency – dedicating revenues to the healthcare of our members, while provid-

ing support for the regional local healthcare infrastructure. Just 4 percent of our revenue goes to administrative costs, compared to estimates of up to 15 percent for the commercial health insurance industry. Our Health Commission and over 300 employees are focused on improving health outcomes for HPSJ members and our communities.

In 2017, we increasingly focused on our commitment to community building, one of our core strengths, as we advocated for our community's health and wellbeing. The nationally recognized Commonwealth Fund agreed.

In "Health Care Improvement in Stockton, California: Collaboration, Capacity Building, and Medicaid Expansion," they found: "The Northern California region of Stockton ... stands out along with Akron, Ohio, for improved on more performance measures than any other region."

They noted: "The region's improvement efforts appear to be facilitated by supportive state policy and the market dominance of a locally governed Medicaid managed care plan [HPSJ]. With 90 percent of the market share in San Joaquin County and over 60 percent in Stanislaus County and long-standing relationships with nearly all local health providers – it has been in the community for 20 years – the insurer

has the leverage to promote broad-scale performance improvements."

While the Commonwealth Fund report gave us encouragement in 2017, the key take-away word for us at HPSJ is "improvements." We believe we can always do better. During these past few years, HPSJ has worked steadily to improve both the reporting of the healthcare being delivered by our provider network, and the full use of benefits by our members.

Health cannot exist in a vacuum. For an authentic picture, it's important to look at this part of the Central Valley in the wake of the Great Recession. Our region hit such an economic low. During the downturn, one of our cities – Stockton – was the only city in California to be forced into bankruptcy. Though our region is coming back, it is taking a longer time than many other parts of California to recover.

Truthfully, at times it's felt like we've been swimming upstream against these powerful economic and social currents. Nevertheless, we are determined. And many of the quality measurements continue to strengthen. These range from cervical cancer screenings to our intense focus on respiratory conditions, for example our medication management for people with asthma.

For much of this steady improve-

ment, we can thank our Central Valley partners who became even more essential in the Great Recession's wake. HPSJ is well positioned to leverage our always limited resources – and unlimited local relationships – to go above and beyond, toward being measurably better.

From convening an opioids crisis collaboration, to pioneering local palliative care partnerships, to listening and understanding cultural differences that can too often get in the way of providing effective and timely care, to children's health initiatives that partner with community-based organizations and providers throughout San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties – 2017 was a very productive year.

In 2018 and beyond, HPSJ will continue to focus on our members and enhancing our community. We invite you to look at our 2017 Community Report, "IMPROVING HEALTH THROUGH – Community, Collaboration & Connection." There, you will hear from some of our partners on specific ways we're joining together to strengthen our community's health. Please go to hpsj.com/About Us. Things are improving, because we're going up this stream, together.

- Lakshmi Dhanvanthari is the Chief Medical Officer for Health Plan of San Joaquin.