



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Sharon Smith

Guest Predictions is a regular Agenda feature in which we interview leaders in a number of professions for their opinion on questions that effect us all.

Sharon Smith is the President and CEO of Health Care Excel, Inc., a nonprofit corporation in Indianapolis. For over thirty years, it has evaluated health care processes and quality, clinical appropriateness, patient perspectives of care, and outcomes. It is primarily a government contractor to the federal Medicare and state Medicaid health care programs. It also provides services to health plans and other clients in the private sector. Please visit www.hce.org for more information.

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: Government health care programs have expanded coverage to include more people and more diverse populations, have become more focused on preventive and chronic care, and have embraced value-driven purchasing concepts. These program changes have a strong influence on our quality improvement and cost containment work.

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A; We continue to grapple with what to do about the under-insured and the uninsured. Access to care and the cost of care are major issues that remain unresolved for many Americans.

Q: How will globalization (e.g. the emergence of new global powers, such as China and India) affect your professional area in the near term?

A: Many significant innovations in health care have occurred in the United States because of what first happened or was known elsewhere. The shift of jobs overseas has lead to more Americans being under-insured or not insured.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: The movement toward purchasing value for the health care dollar--pay for reporting, pay for performance, pay for improvement--these are just a few of the concepts whereby purchasers (public and private) are demanding evidence of value.