A Prospectus for an MSU CARE Program:  
A work-site health care program for employees and dependents

University Committee on Faculty Affairs
Health Care Subcommittee
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BACKGROUND:

Building employer-provided health benefits around work-site based primary care is not a new concept. Numerous success stories exist in many organizations. Successful adopters have seen high employee satisfaction and, the employers believe, significant reductions in their health care costs. They have identified these savings as resulting from evidence-based management of disease, reduction in duplication of services, and contracting fairly but cost-consciously with a network of specialty providers and hospitals. The positive results seen in health care quality and cost management demonstrated by such work-site health care programs are the impetus for the development of such a program for MSU.

While work-site based health care has frequently worked well, we do not know of examples of its adoption in a major public institution. The implementation of a work-site health care program at Michigan State University is innovative and can expect similar positive results regarding quality health care and cost management. Its success will require a commitment by the administration and the employees as they work together to provide resources for its design, implementation and operational management. In addition, the leadership of the program must be committed to monitoring health outcomes, patient satisfaction and cost-savings.

MISSION:

The Mission of the MSU CARE Program is to establish a work place health care practice that will provide a health care benefits program that emphasizes highly accessible high quality health care, and sound practices for cost management. The objectives for the program include, enhanced patient access to primary and specialty medical providers, comprehensive quality health care, coordinated services throughout, electronic medical records systems, an environment of health and wellness, programs for prevention and health education, monitoring patient outcomes and fiscal responsibility. This plan would be one of the options among the health care plans offered by MSU.
DESIGN ATTRIBUTES:

In order to accomplish its mission, the MSU CARE program will rely on the following attributes. All of these items are of importance and hence presented in alphabetical order.

- **Availability of Services:** Through its primary health care providers, the MSU CARE program will be able to facilitate same day access as the norm for emergent illnesses and injuries among its members. The program will use traditional patient scheduling as well as the newer programs known as E-visits. In addition, programs for prescription services known as E-prescriptions will facilitate an enhanced ability for primary care providers and patients to obtain and monitor prescriptions in the health care of MSU employees and dependents. In addition to prompt access to program services, participants will have strong financial incentives to use the network of specialists chosen for high quality and evidence-based outcome history as well as a cost-conscious practice.

- **Comprehensive Quality Health Care:** The model for the program builds on the influences of the primary health care providers. The goal is to develop confidence and trust in the health care services provided for each patient. The primary health care provider becomes the “patient’s doctor” and patients will participate actively as decision-makers in their own health care.

- **Coordinated Services Throughout:** Not only will the in-house services be high quality, through its contractual agreements with a narrow network of medical specialty providers, it will assure the MSU family a continuum of services that provide the highest quality health outcomes.

- **Electronic Medical Records:** A key feature to the operation of MSU CARE is a consistent and detailed electronic medical records (EMR) system. This type of system transcends primary and specialty care and provides for continuing communication among providers in coordinating the health care of the patients. In addition, the information contained in the EMR will provide data to establish specific outcome metrics in order to continue to ensure the high quality and performance of the clinic operations. Integrated electronic medical records can generate cost savings.
• **Health and Wellness Environment:** The MSU CARE facility will serve as the center for programs that promote an environment of health and wellness. In addition to its focus on health care services, it will support programs in areas such as smoking cessation, weight control and personal fitness.

• **Prevention and Health Education:** MSU CARE considers the preventions of disease and injury to be the fundamental properties for establishing a healthy population, i.e., the MSU family of employees and dependents. It advocates the continued monitoring of a patient’s health status to minimize the risk of illness/injury, use early recognition as an intervention in the disease cycle and educate people regarding their personal health as well as their families.

• **Systematic Monitoring of Satisfaction and Outcomes:** MSU Care provides its member services in a manner that allows scientifically credible monitoring and comparison of patient satisfaction and health outcomes. MSU Care will include resources for systematic follow-up of participants and appropriate control groups that directly examine relative outcomes and costs. An annual “report card” regarding services, patient outcomes, patient satisfaction and cost efficiency will be available to the MSU community.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION**

Like any new venture, the implementation of this program has a number of challenges to its success. The following identify specific issues to address during the consideration of the design, development and management of a work-site health care program at MSU.

• **Administrative:**
  o The University must be willing to commit the resources necessary for initialization and operation during the implementation period. There must be a team capable of individualizing health care contracts with local device providers.
  o Other staff and retirees have a process to work with the Administration on health care issues. Working jointly with these groups is important for the proposal to be viable.
  o The success of the program requires a focus of better health care, innovative patient access and consistent fiscal responsibility. An over emphasis on cost
savings without the patience to determine program efficacy will be detrimental to the program’s success. Unitary focus on short-term costs is likely to be detrimental to long-term costs.

- As this program would be a health care provider for MSU, it must be able to negotiate discount levels with specialty health care providers that are competitive with other area health care programs.

  - **Medical:**
    - Managing the political environment among area providers, e.g., Ingham Regional Medical Center, Sparrow Hospital, and private clinics is essential for success. These groups must be willing to negotiate with MSU CARE as they would with BC/BC, etc.
    - MSU CARE must be able to identify specific “centers of excellence” that have demonstrated high quality outcomes in a cost efficient environment. These are important components of completing the spectrum of service necessary for program success.

  - **Patient:**
    - It is essential that MSU employees develop a sense of confidence and trust in the services affiliated with the program.
    - Employees will be concerned about patient privacy and choice of medical providers.
    - MSU CARE must present an atmosphere that promotes health care on balance with its ability to contain costs. Transparency in the process of implementation is essential to success.

**FACULTY ROLE IN IMPLEMENTATION**

The implementation of the MSU CARE program requires resource commitment, focused discussion and continued transparency within the MSU family if the program is to be successful. The University Committee on Faculty Affairs (UCFA) and its Health Care Subcommittee has played an active role in the University’s health care discussion. The Health Care Subcommittee
includes representation from the Office of Planning and Budgets, Human Resources, UCFA, regular faculty, MSU medical faculty and academic specialists. As the health care discussion moves forward, UCFA is committed to its continuing role and urges the designation of an MSU CARE Advisory Board consisting of, but not limited to, current members of the Health Care Subcommittee. The role of the Advisory Board focuses on working with the MSU Administration in moving this proposal forward toward the implementation of MSU CARE. Upon implementation of the program, the Advisory Board would continue to serve in an evaluation/advisory role. As the initiation of an on-site health practice is an innovative idea for MSU, it will require innovative leadership to make it work. The MSU CARE Advisory Board can be a lynch pin in the innovation.