It must be done, but how?
The Challenge of Considering Costs while Caring for Patients

Neel Shah, MD, MPP
Executive Director, Costs of Care

May 27, 2014

Illustration by Peter Arkle, Bloomberg.com 7/11/11

Changing Landscape

Policymakers

accountability

transparency

Patients

Harvard Medical Students

Q: "Have you received adequate training on how to make cost-conscious medical decisions?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Year</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Year + Additional Graduate Degree</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Year</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Year + Additional Graduate Degree</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Percentage of medical students who answered "Too little". p < 0.05
What if Hotel’s Billed Like Hospitals?

Hidden Curriculum

• imbalanced focus on identifying rare cases

• sins of omission > sins of commission

• misperception that considering cost is not aligned with patient interests
doctors are trained to take care of the patient in front of us
… not to assume responsibility for populations

Ethical Motivation for Considering Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good for patient</th>
<th>Bad for patient</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>order test</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>don’t order test</strong></td>
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Good for society

Bad for society
Ten Reasons Clinicians Knowingly Over-Order Tests

1. Pre-emptive ordering
   • Standard practice might be to order a relatively cheap screening test and then if it’s positive, order other expensive tests
   • Instead we sometimes just order everything at the same time so we don’t have to wait

2. Covering all bases
   • In medical culture, doing more is equated with being thorough.
   • If there are five possible conditions that may explain a patient’s symptoms, and it’s probably going to be one or two of them, we might order tests for all five conditions right away.

3. Not realizing how much setting affects costs
   • An MRI in an emergency room setting can be twice the cost of an MRI for an outpatient.
moving from rationing to conservation

help bring environmentalism to health care