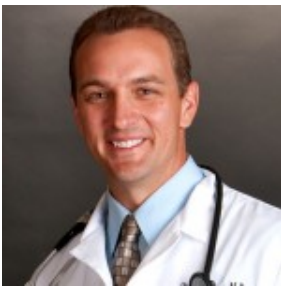


# Opinion: Consolidating health care services is good business

By Clint Purvance

Long ago, physicians would make house calls to families and individuals in need. In the last several decades, patient's needs were met by visiting the doctor through an individually owned facility, called a private practice or they were seen in a hospital setting. This model continues to change throughout the nation.

Today, many specialists and primary care physicians are taking on a new kind of health care model and are affiliating themselves with medical groups or large hospital systems such as Barton Health.



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Many people have expressed their concerns to Barton staff and myself that Barton is purchasing most of the health care facilities around Tahoe and that we are building a "monopoly" to charge our patients more. This is far from the truth. In the last few years, physician practices such as Emerald Bay Center for Women's Health, Tahoe Women's Care, Barton Family Physicians and Tahoe Orthopedic and Sports Medicine have affiliated with Barton in order to keep their individual practices viable due to increasing overhead expenses. This

model does not alter medical decisions – each physician is independent to provide medical care in the best interest of his or her patients.

At Barton we pride ourselves in recruiting and retaining primary care and specialty physicians for our patients and our community, which might otherwise be difficult due to the rising expenses in private doctor's offices. Physicians want to continue to live here and our community continues to need their great care. Barton Health provides the partnership that makes it feasible for physicians to stay in our great community.

“Private practice overhead is quite high and I would not want to employ people and not be able to provide my employees with adequate benefits due to rising costs,” Allison Steinmetz, internal medicine physician with Barton Health, said.

Steinmetz recently joined Barton Internal Medicine after 10 years of medical practice in Santa Cruz with Dominican Hospital. She is a perfect example of “the new model” which enables physicians to focus on the most important task-at-hand – quality patient care.

“My goal is to be able to treat families and help them with their medical decisions. I want to focus on being a doctor, not on the business side of medicine,” Steinmetz said.

Barton proudly partners with more than 140 physicians, nearly 40 departments and oversees numerous facilities in Tahoe and in the Carson Valley, including our acute-care facility, Barton Memorial Hospital.

By managing the business side of medicine for physicians, physicians can focus on their patients and Barton is able to utilize the talents of its staff in business, finance, contracting, billing, building maintenance, purchasing and marketing in the private office setting. This allows our doctors to focus on their patients and creates a more

efficient and cost effective business model that will be sustainable into the future. This new business model enables Barton Health to continue to meet the community's health care needs through improved access to a wide range of physician services. In 2011 alone, Barton is proud to have added much needed services to our small community including cardiology, audiology and physiatry.

As the health care industry continues to change nationwide, Barton Health is committed to providing consistently exceptional care to our community.

*Clint Purvance is chief medical officer for Barton Health.*