

## How to define Population Healthcare

What does population healthcare mean? The term Population Healthcare is used by the vast majority of healthcare executives and politicians, yet if asked the definitions are completely different. The Affordable Care Act (PPACA) in its 906 pages, does not even address the term Population Healthcare. The challenge is that the healthcare system is left to define the term from their own prospective on the healthcare delivery system.

The struggle to define Population Healthcare stems from the fact that the US Healthcare system is built and paid to treat a person's episodic condition. The US Healthcare system is fantastic at fixing a person when they are broken, but not keeping them healthy. The misaligned reimbursement system rewards provider behavior on treating rather than the preventative methodology of managing their patient's chronic conditions to avoid an episodic event.

While a gross over simplification of how Population Healthcare is defined, it is only natural to view this concept through what you are being incentivized and measured. Hospital administrators view Population Healthcare on metrics like infection rates or readmissions. CMS uses the HEDIS-33, Health Outcomes Surveys (HOS) and Consumer Assessments of Health Plans better known in aggregates as the "STAR Ratings," to define Population Healthcare. Consumers define Population Healthcare as timely access to services they deem necessary. Specialists view Population Healthcare based on the outcomes from their treatment.

While these views are pieces to the Population Healthcare definition, none of these perspectives accurately encapsulates the true meaning of the term. I would argue, "Population Healthcare is the holistic management of an individual's chronic healthcare conditions to help the individual achieve the best quality of life they are capable of achieving."

To be successful under the new rules of healthcare, it is imperative that we in the healthcare field are able to evolve from episodic care to Population Healthcare. Doing what is right for the patient is both good medicine and financially rewarding. It is time for all of us to evolve.

Eric Vanderhoef  
Founder and CEO  
Gremlo – a Population Healthcare Software Company  
evanderhoef@gremlo.com