As part of a recent event sponsored by the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce, I was asked if I had any advice for the health care industry in general and if there were specific changes I hoped to see implemented during the next 10-15 years. My responses to both questions centered on the need for consumers of hospital and physician services to have easier access to information about the cost and quality of health care providers so they (the consumers) can make better decisions and exercise greater control over the system itself. In case any readers who weren't at the Chamber event might be interested in these subjects, my answers to the two questions were as follows:

First, my advice for the health care industry is that it needs to become more transparent. Even though reliable measures of performance do exist, it is still overly difficult for the average person to discern the true value (price and outcome) of health care services. We need to make it much easier for people to understand what they are really getting for their money. Related to this, the industry also needs to become less paternalistic, so consumers can be more empowered and engaged in decisions about their care. Major transformations of the industry’s care model and its business model are already underway; transparency and empowerment will only help to accelerate these positive developments.

Second, I hope when I look back at the health care system in 10-15 years I will see that we’ve figured out how to prevent the country from going bankrupt by controlling the cost of health care while also improving its quality. This will take tremendous innovation, collaboration, and coordination. I hope health care providers will have found productive ways to work together for the common good, rather than striving exclusively to satisfy their own self-interests. I hope by then providers and payers (including employers) will have learned how to align their incentives and integrate their services more effectively. And I hope we’ll see consumers playing a more informed, active, and influential role in the health care system.

Fortunately, progress is being made on several of these fronts. For example, a pregnant woman can go to www.iowahospitalcharges.com and with a few simple clicks obtain an easy-to-interpret report on local hospital charges for childbirth. Similarly, anyone can visit www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare and quickly construct side-by-side comparisons of hospital performance in such areas as clinical quality, safety, patient satisfaction, and cost efficiency. My sense is that although these tools are available to the general public, not too many people have begun using them yet. However, the convergence of mobile and digital technologies may change that situation. And comparatively new sites such as Sharecare.com and myhealth.com, along with numerous other mobile apps, may contribute momentum to the consumer empowerment movement. For the sake of individuals, our community, and the health care system at large, I hope that is the case.
BE GOOD TO YOUR GUT
Follow these tips to improve your digestive health

Eat smaller, more frequent meals to help prevent indigestion, bloating, heartburn, and other digestive health issues.

To ease constipation, fill your plate with fiber-rich foods like whole grains, beans, nuts, fruits, and vegetables.

Your body needs a recommended 20-35 grams of fiber daily.

Exercise helps your body's digestive system move things along. It can help with minor digestive problems like bloating and constipation.

Stress can aggravate digestive problems like irritable bowel syndrome and ulcers.

Reduce stress by exercising, getting enough sleep, eating right, and relaxing.

Probiotics are good bacteria that help keep the natural balance of organisms in your intestines, possibly helping diarrhea, irritable bowel syndrome, and inflammatory bowel disease. Probiotics can be found in supplement form or in foods like yogurt.
Imagine vacationing in a foreign country, only to end up in intensive care with a serious medical condition. That’s what happened to John Schmitt, of Peosta, Iowa, in January 2014.

John and his wife were in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, for their daughter’s wedding. They enjoyed the beautiful celebration, but the next day when John was fishing, he became very ill. “I was in pain and couldn’t breathe,” John recalls.

John was admitted to the hospital in Punta Cana, where physicians made a diagnosis of respiratory infection. He spent five days in the hospital, three of them in ICU. After extending their stay, John and his wife were finally able to return home. A follow-up visit with John’s primary
[John] was very determined that he would be the best he could be. Honestly, by the time he was done with the program, I had a hard time keeping up with him.”

Julie Heins Reber, pulmonary rehab nurse

physician indicated that he likely had a severe case of pneumonia. John also learned that he has COPD.

COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), is a progressive disease that makes it hard to breathe. "Progressive" means the disease gets worse over time. COPD can cause coughing that produces large amounts of mucus, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness, and other symptoms.

“That’s a result of smoking for 44 years,” John confirms. Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of COPD.

John soon experienced a second episode at home, and he was admitted to Mercy. He spent eight days in the hospital, with five of them on high-flow oxygen. During his time at Mercy, John met with staff from pulmonary rehabilitation to learn more about his disease and what he could do about it.

Because COPD is progressive, pulmonary rehab nurse Julie Heins Reber stresses the importance of beginning a rehab program soon after a diagnosis. “The earlier they gain this knowledge, the sooner they can gain the life skills for coping with their disease process. The disease can progress to the point that continuous oxygen supplementation is required, and it can lead to depression and loss of ability to care for themselves,” Julie describes.

John knew his first step should be to quit smoking. “During my eight days at Mercy, I didn’t smoke. I thought, if I’m ever going to do it, now’s the time because I’ve already got eight days behind me.”

John started pulmonary rehab, which includes exercise and classroom instruction two days per week for eight weeks.

“I was a little nervous about starting,” John admits. “But the staff was just the best. They check your vitals when you get there, while you’re exercising, and after you’re done exercising, so you’re in a really safe, controlled environment. They really encourage you. And the classes were really informative. I can’t say enough about the program.”

Julie was impressed with John’s positive attitude and commitment to the program. “He was very determined that he would be the best he could be. Honestly, by the time he was done with the program, I had a hard time keeping up with him.”

John has taken his diagnosis seriously and has progressively improved rather than progressively declined. “I’m getting stronger. And that’s always good when you have COPD. I’ll have it for the rest of my life, but the goal is to stay strong and maintain so it doesn’t keep getting worse.”

John is enjoying favorite hobbies again, like fishing and traveling, and he walks several miles nearly every day. He has even started jogging and has set a goal of jogging a half mile before the end of summer—quite an accomplishment for someone with a diagnosis of COPD.

And perhaps the best news, after 44 years of heavy smoking, John has now gone 18 months without a cigarette.
Q: I need a hysterectomy. What are the advantages of having a robotic-assisted hysterectomy?

A: If you have been diagnosed with endometriosis, fibroids, heavy menstrual bleeding, pelvic prolapse or gynecologic cancer, your doctor may recommend a hysterectomy. Robotic assisted hysterectomy might be an option for you.

Robotic assisted hysterectomy is a state of the art technology for simple and complex procedures. Your doctor controls the robotic system with a magnified 3D HD view inside your body and has special wristed instruments that bend and rotate far greater than the human wrist. As a result, your doctor can operate with enhanced vision, precision, and control.

Some of the potential benefits of robotic assisted hysterectomy include:

- Less blood loss
- Fewer complications
- Shorter hospital stay
- Small incisions for minimal scarring
- Lower risk of a large abdominal scar
- Less need for narcotic pain medicine

Talk with your doctor to see if this is the right option for you.

Trupti Mehta, MD, Medical Associates Clinic, Department of Obstetrics/Gynecology and Infertility

**SURGICAL SUITE RENOVATIONS**

Three newly renovated and expanded surgical suites are now in use. The larger operating rooms offer HD cameras and new technology mounted from the ceiling to allow for better traffic flow during procedures. These renovations are part of an overall plan to expand and modernize Mercy’s nine operating rooms.

**MERCY GIFT SHOP**

Shop gifts and home decor at the Mercy Gift Shop. All proceeds support programs and services for children in Mercy’s care. As always, there is no sales tax.

Monday, Thursday, and Friday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Tuesday and Wednesday: 10 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
DRA GRANTS AWARDED TO DUBUQUE AND DYERSVILLE FOUNDATIONS

Dubuque Mercy Health Foundation received a grant from the Dubuque Racing Association of $9,837.50, enabling Mercy to provide a remote patient monitoring system for discharged heart failure patients. This new program provides real-time monitoring and assessment of patient vital signs (blood pressure, weight, pulse/oxygen, blood glucose, etc.) interpreted by a professionally trained nursing staff. The critical information gathered during the 30-day program will allow staff to make evidence-based decisions and provide confidence and security during an already stressful time. Most importantly, it will help patients remain at home where they are most comfortable.

Dyersville Health Foundation received a $5,000 grant from the DRA. These funds will be used to install automatic door openers to several interior doors at Mercy – Dyersville. “This generous gift from the DRA will literally ‘open doors’ for patients, staff and visitors to our facility, easing navigation through our halls for those with mobility issues,” said Liz Heins, director of the Dyersville Health Foundation.

A MOVE FOR THE HOME CARE STORE

With the current construction and remodeling of Mercy’s front entrance, the Mercy Home Care Store has moved. Stop by to check out the beautiful new store, located in the main corridor on first floor.

You can also visit us online at mercydubuque.com/home-medical-equipment

GRILLED FISH KEBABS

MAKES 6 SERVINGS • SERVING SIZE: 2 SKEWERS

INGREDIENTS

1 pound salmon fillet, skinned and cut into 1 ½-inch chunks
1 small zucchini, cut into ¾-inch chunks
4 ounces fresh baby bella mushrooms, large ones cut in half
½ red onion, wedged and pulled apart
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped
3 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons lime juice
⅛ teaspoon salt
Black pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1 - Soak 12 wood skewers in water. In a large, shallow baking dish, arrange salmon, zucchini, mushrooms, and onion in a single layer.
2 - In a small bowl, whisk the garlic, rosemary, olive oil, lime juice, salt, and pepper. Pour the mixture over the salmon and vegetables and toss to coat evenly. Let the mixture sit at room temperature for 15 to 20 minutes.
3 - Meanwhile, line your grill with heavy-duty foil. Spray with nonstick cooking spray. Preheat grill to medium heat.
4 - Thread the salmon and vegetables on the skewers. Grill the kebabs for 5 minutes, turning once halfway through cooking. Serve immediately.
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE?
MERCY JUST FOR YOU WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM

Metabolism is an important factor in your ability to lose weight. Our registered/licensed dietitian team will measure your metabolism using the MedGem calorimeter and create an individualized, nutritional weight-loss plan—Just for You—that promotes healthy and lasting weight loss. Each participant will receive a detailed, customized report that provides the information you need to lose weight and keep it off.

Learn more at mercydubuque.com/weightloss

GRILLED FISH KEBABS

Salmon has an unusually high omega-3 fatty acid content. Typically, four ounces of salmon contain approximately 1 gram of omega-3 fats — more than the average U.S. adult gets from all food over the course of several days. These tasty salmon kebabs are livened up with a refreshing rosemary lime marinade. The recipe is heart-healthy, diabetic friendly, and gluten-free.

— Kristie Jacobsen, RD, LD

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:
208 calories, 14g fat, 2g saturated fat, 44mg cholesterol, 128mg sodium, 2g carbohydrates, 0g fiber, 24g protein