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Bringing the Real World to the Beltway: Anticipating the 2008 Elections

UnitedHealth Group Executive Vice President and Chief of Medical Affairs Reed Tuckson, MD participated in an educational forum for legislative leaders on Capitol Hill regarding the impact of consumer-centric strategies on health and health benefits delivery. Against the backdrop of this fall's elections, an open dialogue with leaders in government is particularly important to continued innovation in health care.



The forum, hosted by former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and his Center for Health Transformation, offered an in-depth review of successful consumer-centered health plans on Tuesday, April 8th for key Hill staff members. The seminar, titled "Better Health, Lower Cost: Examples from the Real World," featured five thought-leaders from organizations helping lead the way towards an improved healthcare system.

"No vision of a 21st Century Intelligent Healthcare System is complete without the core component of consumerism," said Gingrich. "Patients are always to be at the center of healthcare discussions, and today's panel proved that better consumer education, personalized participation and a metric-based system for tracking success can save lives and save money."

The panel discussion was introduced by Gingrich, with opening comments from Dr. Michael Burgess, Congressman from Texas' 26th District. Joining Dr. Tuckson in the discussion were: Wayne Sensor, CEO of Alegen Health; Dr. Ron Loeppke, Chief Strategy Officer of Matria Healthcare; and Michael Reitz, Chief Marketing Officer of Blue Cross Blue Shield Louisiana. Each shared perspectives on their company's experiences, successes and challenges in transforming healthcare.



Tuckson brought to the panel more than 25 years of industry leadership, including positions at the American Medical Association and as former Commissioner of Public Health for the District of Columbia. He spoke about the positive impact of consumerism in health and its role in improving both the quality and efficiency of health services. Studies have demonstrated that — at the same time that quality of care is advanced — UnitedHealth Group's consumer-driven health plans typically save employers between 10 and 12 percent compared to traditional Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plans, and generally result in lower premiums and out-of-pocket costs for consumers.



"Collectively, we need to drive positive, transformational change in the health system so that people get the right care, at the right time, in the right place," said Tuckson. "Putting consumers at the center of the health care experience and empowering them to exercise greater control of their own health are fundamental to this."

As noted by Speaker Gingrich, there are real, measurable success stories in health care today. Bringing examples of innovations such as those shared by UnitedHealth Group and other panelists to legislators and the health policy community will be critical to accelerating and sustaining change. We look forward to continued, active participation in the public debate and bringing meaningful innovation to health.

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