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All In Chicago: Uncovering the Relationship between Transportation and Health Access

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Transportation has an enormous effect on access to health care. A startling presentation by Mindi Knebel, Chief Executive Officer of [Kaizen Health](#), during the All In™ Chicago event on November 8, 2017, showed that each year, missed appointments across the country cost the U.S health care system over [\\$150 billion](#). From this, 25%, or about \$37.5 billion, are directly due to lack of appropriate transportation. A patient's inability to find transportation to make their appointments can lead to avoidable escalation of medical treatment which can become not only a physical burden to the patient, but also a financial burden to health care systems. We recently asked Ms. Knebel to continue exploring this topic for our All In™ LinkedIn series.

CommunityHealth: Why should transportation be considered a priority to address in the health care system?

Mindi Knebel: Prioritizing transportation is important because it impacts the patient's accessibility to appropriate care, and in turn leads to financial effects on the health care system. For example, if someone requires dialysis but cannot afford a ride, they may skip their treatment. After skipping a couple of times, they become very sick and call 911 for an ambulance to go to the emergency room, and then they are likely to be admitted to the hospital. Another person may have the ability to pay for transportation, but they may not be able to order the ride because

they do not own a phone. The logistical barriers are just as challenging as the financial barriers and can have similar consequences because both are liable to prevent residents from attending their medical appointments.

Both of these examples can be prevented by simply covering transportation, which is a much more cost effective solution than intensifying the physical effects [of the current health issue] to the patient's life and/or creating unnecessary expense for medical treatment. But in order to make transportation scalable, cost effective, and impactful, public/private partnerships are necessary.

CH: What do you think it will take for cities like Chicago to invest in solutions that can alleviate the staggering costs of missed appointments?

MK: The investment needed to alleviate the cost of missed appointments and using inappropriate transportation – such as a patient calling 911 and riding an ambulance for a sinus infection – would be to ensure that emergency services, hospitals, clinics, supportive organizations, etc. have the ability to schedule appropriate transportation for those in need based on the needs of the person. This would ideally include public transportation, bike share, rideshare, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant vehicles, and specialty vehicles (e.g., vehicles with car seats, MediVans, and non-emergency ambulances).

CH: Are there transportation assistance options for those that are uninsured? How can uninsured/uninsurable individuals benefit from your transportation services?

MK: While some health plans do reimburse the cost of transportation, regrettably the uninsured do not have access to this benefit. In order for the uninsured/uninsurable individuals to benefit from transportation services, we would need to work with another organization to help pay for transportation. We have seen this done through non-profit organizations that target certain patient populations or even larger healthcare systems that cover clinics to provide free care. The best way that I have seen the business community engage is by sponsoring non-profit organizations' transportation programs.

CH: What does being “all in” mean to you?

MK: Being “all in” to me means that as a community we all need to work together to take care of all of our constituents, not just those fortunate enough to have the resources to take care of themselves. We need to be compassionate and supportive to ensure that all of our neighbors have access to the care that many of us have come to expect.

Mindi Knebel is the founder and CEO of Kaizen Health, a Chicago-based startup that connects healthcare and transportation to increase access to healthcare.



Mindi has spent over decade being on the founding team or early employee of five startups. Throughout her career, Mindi has spent time in business and sales operations/planning, M&A/integrations, technology project management, accounting/finance and human resources.

A passionate problem solver, Mindi was inspired to start Kaizen Health due to some challenges that her own family faced with medical transportation. Not wanting others to endure the same challenges, Mindi led the Kaizen Health team to develop a robust logistics intelligence engine to connect healthcare providers, health insurance companies, transportation networks and patients to ensure visibility, transparency and communication among all constituents.

Mindi is an alum of the University of Iowa and Colorado Technical University and sits on the associate boards of Cook County Health Foundation and SALUTE.

Are you all in? Join us as we continue the conversation to build a healthier Chicago in 2018. To learn more, please visit www.all-inchicago.org.