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“Medicare Advantage is the Future of Medicare”

By Allyson Y. Schwartz, President & CEO

Good Morning and Welcome to the 3rd Annual Better Medicare Alliance Medicare Advantage Summit!

Better Medicare Alliance is delighted to host this conference. I want to thank Jerry Penso, President of American Medical Group Association, as Co-Chair of the Summit for his partnership and his leadership in supporting the health care transformation happening today.

A special thank you to all of our sponsors for their generous support, in particular our platinum sponsors, CVS Health and Lyft. And, I would like to acknowledge the speakers, many representing BMA ally organizations who are with us, most of whom will stay throughout our 2-day conference. Thank you for sharing your experiences and insights.

It is why we are all here!

And, I also want to acknowledge the BMA staff for their tremendous effort in putting this together.

As many of you know, BMA is a unique national alliance of health care stakeholders that includes provider groups and health systems, health plans, aging service organizations, professional associations, business and community partners, as well as beneficiaries.

Together, we are now 135 organizations and over 400,000 beneficiaries who support and advocate for Medicare Advantage.

We know first-hand that Medicare Advantage is leading the way in innovative financing and delivery of care that is the future of Medicare.

And this is what inspired the theme of this year’s Summit: Innovations in Medicare Advantage!

As we gather here today, health care continues to be the top of mind in Washington. Almost every day policymakers are talking about health care – from high prescription drug prices to the future of Medicare.

We recognize the very real issues that are driving this discussion, including the concern about out-of-pocket costs, cost of specialty prescription drugs, and continuity of coverage.

We are proud of the fact that Medicare Advantage offers older adults and individuals with disabilities quality care they can count on, at a cost they can afford ---and, as we will be discussing over the next 2 days, transforming care to meet the needs of today’s beneficiaries.

More than one third of beneficiaries—over 22 million people are making the choice of Medicare Advantage. And, the numbers are growing. As beneficiaries tell us themselves, they appreciate

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the quality, affordability, coordinated care, enhanced benefits and consumer cost protections in MA, unavailable in Traditional Medicare.

Today, it is Medicare Advantage that is addressing the needs and expectations of consumers in innovative ways and creating a model for the nation.

From telemedicine to care in the home, Medicare Advantage is providing opportunities to give people the care they need while addressing clinical and non-clinical needs in integrated care systems.

I for one enjoy my Apple Watch that tracks my steps, heart rate, and even prompts me to breathe or stand up after sitting for long periods!

Personal devices, remote monitoring, virtual patient visits, and tele-communications between providers on behalf of patients— are all becoming the reality of modern health care.

These new technologies and the promises they bring to monitor our health are exciting indeed.

But, we are also witnessing the modernization of care built on the most basic concepts that are essential to living healthier.

Concepts like preventing illnesses, managing chronic conditions, and slowing disease progression that include the ability to access healthy foods, to exercise, socialize, to care for ourselves and access the providers we need.

We know a system of care that both acknowledges the importance of technology and the importance of social supports is the future of Medicare.

The future of Medicare is a system that combines clinical care rooted in patient-centered primary care, with smart benefits based on value, tailored to patients' needs, and responsive to each person's individual health goals.

The future of Medicare is a system that gives patients access to a team of doctors who track your health, can anticipate your risk of disease and develop a plan of care to enhance your chance at the best quality of life—even as you age.

That is the kind of system of care available today in Medicare Advantage.

Enabled by new laws and policy changes, forward-thinking plans and providers, entrepreneurs and community partners, Medicare Advantage is bringing a new era to Medicare through a drive to value, risk-based payments, new delivery models, and enhanced patient engagement.

It is transforming health care every day across the nation. And, patients are embracing the coverage and care it provides.

A couple of recent quick stories from BMA's own storybook:

Ms. Brown, Texas City, TX:

I have Medicare Advantage, and so does my Mom. This policy has been a GOD send for us. We get dental, and optical care besides our medical and pharmaceutical needs. My Mom just had pacemaker surgery. A nurse contacted us and made two home visits already, and even ordered frozen meals and had them sent to our home. They are really good.

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Mr. Rayer:

I have been a Medicare Advantage member for almost five years! During that time, I have been an active user of the Silver Sneakers! I have had several surgeries due to disc and hip issues and received great care and follow-up rehab! Plus, I also received on going follow up contact and food while recovering! My plan has been quite useful and I want to be able to maintain this valuable program.

And, Ms. Gordon, Savannah, GA:

I believe Medicare Advantage is important for me because it provides rides to and from my appointments at no cost. That in itself is a lifesaver because I don't drive and transportation is not always available. They truly care.

It is early in the morning, but I say we should cheer for all of you who are making this happen!

Cheer for all of you who believe that we can offer better care, at better cost, for consumers and our nation!

You are doing this by aligning goals and getting people the right care, in the right setting, with the right provider, at the right time.

You are creating efficiencies, anticipating needs and driving value for beneficiaries – and as a result, enhancing the chance at the best quality of life as we grow older.

While there is much to be proud in America's health care, it is too often confusing, fragmented and costly.

We know we can do better – and we are.

The change you are leading in Medicare Advantage is as exciting as it is important.

It is modernizing Medicare and it is offering lessons that are already having a positive effect on the rest of health care.

This Summit is an opportunity to listen and to share the ideas and action that is propelling this transformation.

To hear about the work being done to build on advances in technology and data analytics.

To highlight the simple truths long ignored in health care to provide better care for millions of older adults, many of whom live with serious, multiple chronic conditions.

At BMA, we believe that working together with all of you, we can build on these innovations to modernize and ensure the future of Medicare.

That together, we can lead in ensuring that health care is high quality, accessible and affordable for everyone.

Thank you for what you do and enjoy the next 2 days!