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PNN Interview: Dr. Edward Cohen, XiMED Board of Directors



In a recent interview with PNN, Edward Cohen, MD, CEO of Genesis Healthcare Partners, said that independent specialty groups like his have a distinct market advantage in an environment where there will always be a need for private practice physicians. Ability to come up with out-of-the-box solutions is part of the reasons why.

Genesis Healthcare Partners is a private 25-physician urology group, part of Ximed Medical Group. Dr. Cohen said groups like his will continue to thrive because they create a way for physicians to come together and leverage resources, standardize treatments for better outcomes and at the same time preserve the culture of independence and a sense of ownership.

But he said it is not for everyone. The group had a few residents leave because they didn't have a mind-set of an entrepreneur.

"They just wanted to clock in and clock out and get paid without understanding the reality that someone else is controlling how they get paid," Dr. Cohen said. "It might look good now, but it might not look so good later," he said. "In private practice at least you have control. Some type of an entrepreneurial spirit is needed to continue to provide healthcare and support."

Most of the specialty care in the emergency rooms in San Diego County is done by private practice medicine. "You do not see Scripps Clinic doctors manning the emergency room at Scripps La Jolla. You don't see Sharp Steely and Sharp doctors manning the emergency room at Sharp," Dr. Cohen said. "The specialists that they call are doctors in private practice, and those are the ones who respond."

Private practice is here to stay, but it needs to change with the changing times, Dr. Cohen said. "Doctors need to figure out how to work together so that collectively they have voice in the community and a seat at the table to dictate how things are done. Doctors need to look at what they do and how they do it and keep asking themselves, 'Is this the best I can do it and is there a better way?'"



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Some of the advantages of operating as a group is being able to push that quality envelope and come up with improvements that will continue to keep the cost down but revenue up.

An example of this advantage for the Genesis Healthcare Partners was the development of software that the group now plans on selling to other practices. Dr. Cohen explained that just like other physicians, his group was not happy with the electronic medical records system that is nothing more than a “fancy electronic filing cabinet” that doesn’t allow physicians to utilize data in a way they want in order to take care of patients.

The group wanted to figure out how to follow their patients better. The solution was to have one of the students write software to extract data in real time and follow patients to identify when their status would change so that the system could send out an alert to let a physician know that his patient is eligible for a new drug or treatment, for example. Other groups saw what the software does and wanted to be able to do the same. So the group is in the process of creating a separate software company to move this product forward, starting with urology and then expanding it from there.

The main challenge of coming together as a group, according to Dr. Cohen, is to create and maintain the culture.

Getting to group culture is one of the most important items. “If the focus is patient care, the culture needs to be driven towards that,” he said. An example can be a group decision to have only a few physicians perform robotic surgeries. This ensures the quality because someone performing robotic surgeries all the time will provide better care than someone who does it only a few times a year. They will also do it faster, which benefits hospitals. “We have 98% of robotic prostatectomies done by two people in our group. So we, as a culture, feel comfortable sending our patients to one of these two people, and as a result we have better patient outcomes in our group.” This becomes even more important as everyone moves away from fee-for-service model towards population management.

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