



Martin Gabica MD

...short story...family physician and patient advocate

"It is my belief during my 27 years in practice that a physician's job has three parts: diagnosis, treatment, and education. When I was training residents and other providers, I would emphasize to them that they need to see themselves as teachers. I emphasized that ensuring that the patient understands his or her diagnosis and treatment plan is a skill set just as important as delivering the diagnosis or determining a treatment plan."

footprints: I am a Family Physician. I trained at the Boise Family Medicine residency and never left. I practiced Family Medicine for 27 years before coming to Healthwise 5 years ago. I worked as a Medical Director at Healthwise for four years before becoming the CMO. I am responsible for the medical accuracy of all of Healthwise content. I manage a team of employed physicians and a PhD clinical psychologist. I also manage over 220 contracted physicians who review our content. I also have executive responsibilities within the organization. I help ensure that we run well as a business, but also as a nonprofit organization. My team spends lots of time with clients talking about what it takes to deliver evidence-based, patient-friendly education. | **key areas of interest & expertise:** I am an expert in patient education emphasizing the doctor/patient partnership and shared decision making. | **key guides & inspirations:** Don Kemper, our founder and CEO. He is a visionary who has been able to look to the needs of consumers of health information. And Steve Schneider, our previous CMO, who has had the unique ability to understand the mind of the patient. | **motivations & passions:** I believe in the power of the patient to transform health care. By engaging patients in taking an active role in their own health and expanding their skills, we can reduce costs and improve the quality of health care. So I view the patient as more than a passive recipient of my care, but as a motivated partner who is willing to do their part in their own health care—and has the potential to make a real difference. | **what makes it all worthwhile?** Hearing the stories of people who have used our content and had a good outcome.

Q: Marty, what one or two issues would you like to address for this interview and why?

A: Health care in the United States is in crisis, but a solution lies in the transformation in the role of the average patient. The patient is the only health care resource that has enough potential to make a real difference.

All of the furor around the new health care reform laws, ACOs, PCMHs, P4P, and other issues center more on providers of health care than they do on their patients and the populace in general. If you look at the various requirements for these new ideas you find lots of rules about how providers should act. You find very little about how to motivate patients to become involved in their own care. Studies have revealed that a patient's feeling of empowerment is one of the most important factors in motivating behavior change. If a person believes that they have the ability to do something then

they are more likely to do it. That's why we need to instill in our physicians and other providers the importance of making it part of the standard of care to deliver the kind of health education and tools that empower their patients into believing in their own ability to change and manage their health. We must be willing to discuss the patient's personal beliefs and preferences when discussing their health issues so that we, as clinicians, can provide the kind of support that helps patients ask for care they should receive and refuse care they do not need.

Q: What do you see as potential barriers, pitfalls, risks, "opportunities," or remedies?

A: Time and training for providers to enable them to listen to their patients and guide them is a huge barrier. This means reimbursement for doing so. It also means being paid when a patient chooses to not do a procedure as well as when they decide to do it. Providers

need to be willing to accept patient choices that may not be what they want the patient to do. They need to get the training in residency that enables them to counsel, listen, and educate. They need the tools to help them do so without disruption to their work flow. Health education must be included in the standard of care. And the provider must be willing and able to shift some of the control and responsibility back to the patient. And that's when the patient must be a willing and motivated participant. With the right information, patients can provide their own self-care, prepare for each visit so that the provider can more quickly assess symptoms and concerns and give guidance on the right care plan, and help the providers have more time to cover more critical issues. Helping patients help themselves will improve the quality of care and reduce the burdens on the provider.

Q: If you had one wish for an ideal, what would that be? Or a vision? However you want to answer this...

A: Every person in the US has access to help, in ways they can understand, and tools for helping them feel empowered in managing their health.

Q: What would it take for that to happen?

A: A better understanding of what empowers people. Tailored and targeted educational tools. A way to pay for these things.

Q: What do you see as potentially helping medical leaders and others with what you've selected to address?

A: We need more dollars spent on research about motivating patients. What works? Put more patient centered requirements into standards. You can't be a PCMH unless 50% of your patients feel empowered towards managing their own health. Same with an ACO.

Q: Do you have favored resources for any groups on the topics you are addressing?

A: The Society for Shared Decision Making journal and blog. Society of Behavioral Medicine News and Updates.

Q: Do you have other general favored resources? Medical or otherwise?

A: Epocrates. American Family Physician. Health Affairs.

Q: Tell us about Healthwise.

A: . Founded in 1975, Healthwise is a nonprofit organization with one mission: to help people make better health decisions. We write and produce health information just for consumers. We have solutions in print, electronic, and mobile. Our customers are health plans, care management companies, hospitals, and consumer health portals. Our writers use consumer-friendly language and our content is evidence-based and up-to-date.

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The solution to the health care crisis is the transformation in the role of the average patient. What is needed is a better understanding of what empowers people. We need more research on what motivates patients. What is also needed is time and training of physicians and a different way to reimburse them. ... ”

Q: Any <medical leaders . org> interview candidates that you'd like to hear from?

A: Warren Buffet on health care reform?

Q: Do you have a favorite story for us?

A: Stories to choose from—

Healthwise receives many thank you notes from people who use our content and have a good outcome because of it. One was about a child who had a high fever and the family was told he had the flu by their pediatrician. After consulting the Healthwise Handbook, the family was concerned he had meningitis and rushed him to the emergency room. Their knowledge and insistence led to the diagnosis and hospitalization with a good outcome. Another was from a woman who was experiencing chills and sweats. After consulting Healthwise content, she

went to the emergency room telling them she might be having a heart attack. That turned out to be exactly the case, and she was successfully treated.

Q: And almost lastly, the best medicine is to be happy, yes? What's your favored flavor-of-the-moment to make you or any of us more happy? Toss us a little tidbit from your medicine cabinet, please.

A: Balance your life. Make family, friends, recreation and personal security as important as your work. Make the 80/20 rule your mantra. Eat right most of the time, but if bacon and eggs on Saturdays is something you really like, then do it. If you are religious about your exercise, but enjoy vegging out in front of football on the TV Sunday afternoons, do it. If you work hard all week, but get an invite to go fishing with a friend on a Wednesday, do it.

Q: Now tell us something fun about you?

A: I paid my way through college and medical school working as a smokejumper for the US Forest Service. That job developed my love of the outdoors. I will take any opportunity to be outside, and business meetings should be held there if possible. Skiing, fly fishing, biking, hiking are all on the table when you come to Boise.