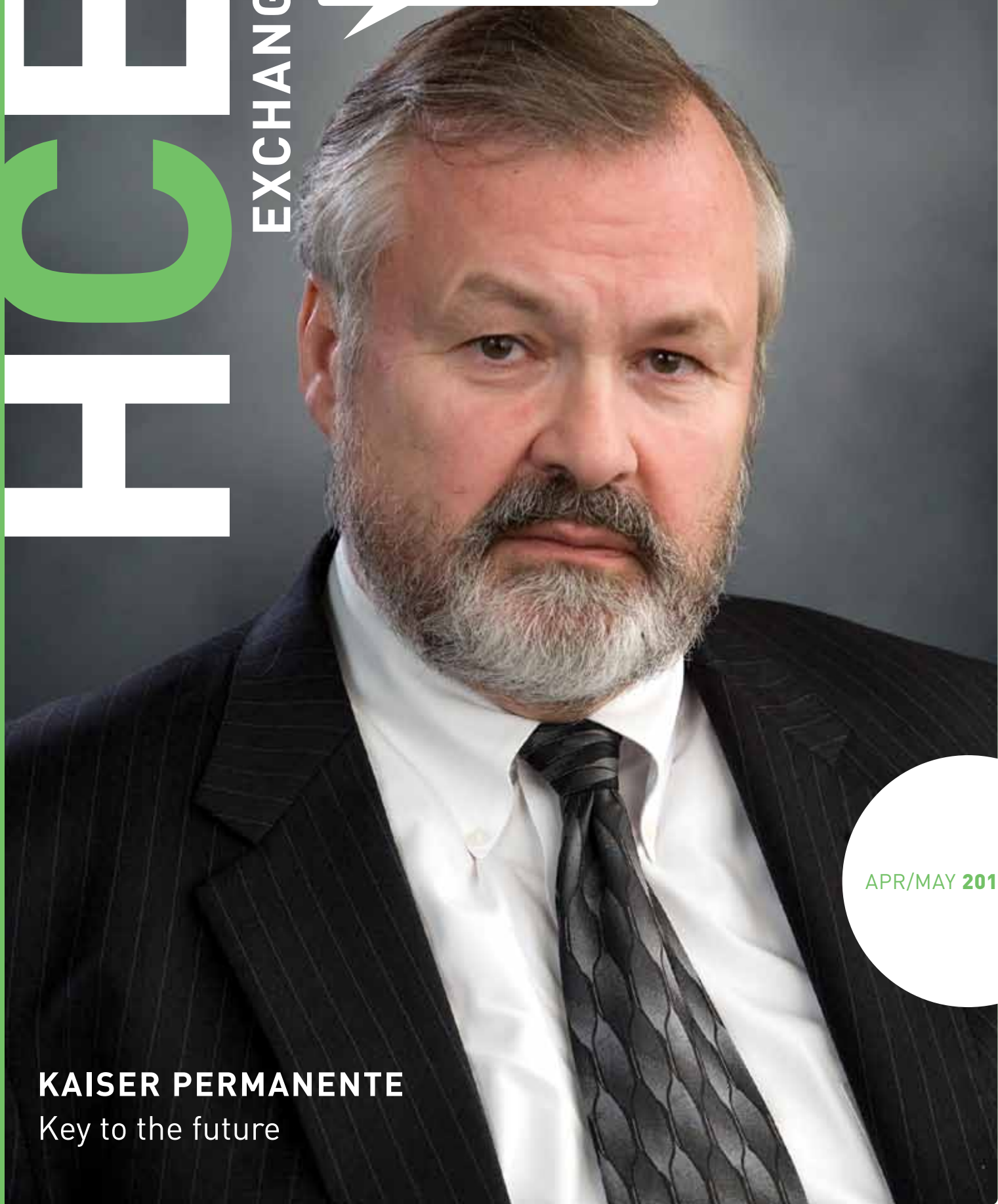


Real Issues : Real Solutions

# HEALTHCARE

## EXCHANGE



APR/MAY 2010

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## HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN PARTNERS



Hospital Physician Partners is a privately held company that provides Emergency Medicine and Hospitalist Medicine management. The company currently contracts through its various divisions with approximately 130 hospitals and healthcare organizations nationwide. Their team of more than 2,000 physicians and mid-level providers treat more than 2,000,000 patients per year.

“We don’t necessarily look at ourselves as a contract management company, even though that’s the category we are in,” says Jeffrey Schillinger, Chief Executive Officer. “We really are a physician organization at the end of the day. Our focus is on improving the patient experience. The thing that differentiates us from our competitors is that we have a disproportionately high number of corporate or management clinicians who actively practice medicine at our client hospitals. We make physical contact with our client hospitals more often than many of our competitors. We are hands on, working at a clinical level to resolve issues that affect patient flow and the patient experience both in the emergency department and in the hospital from an in-patient perspective.”

### OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE EQUALS LOCAL PRESENCE

The Clinical Operations team members and Medical Directors who work with Hospital Physician Partners are not just there in an advisory capacity. They are clinically active physicians working regular shifts in the hospitals they manage.

“So if we have someone who is a Regional Medical Director supervising operations at 10 or 15 hospitals, that physician is working, through the course of the year, a number of shifts at each one of those hospitals so that he or she can be intimately familiar with the issues that need to be addressed in that client’s operation,” says Schillinger.

“From a clinical standpoint, true management and operational excellence has to start from the ground floor and it has to start from a local presence,” he says. “For the 2,000 plus physicians that work with Hospital Physician Partners nationwide, our clinical operations team members probably know more than 90% of those folks by first names.”

### THREE AREAS OF CHALLENGE

Schillinger lists the shortage of qualified physicians as one of the company’s top challenges. A second challenge is the lack of uniformity in information technology across hospitals. “This necessitates a customized or individualized approach to each individual hospital or hospital system,” he says. “This adds layers of cost to the hospital system.”

“There are still hospitals out there that do not have the funds to develop the capability to join the information age electronically and get us information in that manner. They are still, probably to the shock of many people, photocopying records and mailing them to us for processing. That is a process that is a little antiquated at this point and I see it as one of our greater challenges.”

Another challenge Schillinger sees his company addressing is the fact that rural and unaffiliated hospitals in this country are facing such huge financial difficulties, making it very difficult for them to provide localized healthcare services. “We have to negotiate contracts with these hospitals that they can actually afford without having to cut other services that they

have previously provided for their communities. That’s part of the function of the entire healthcare system,” says Schillinger.

“Our company spends essentially its entire capital budget in information technology. Unlike a hospital, we have no physical plant to maintain. Our challenge is trying to integrate our technology with our clients in order to allow for an orderly flow of data (medical and otherwise).”

### PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

“We maintain a performance improvement department which is staffed by an analytics team which is continually mining data,” says Schillinger. “They are reviewing charts and records from the hospitals, analyzing our departmental and physician metrics and looking for patient outcomes that need further review.”

Schillinger says that prior to the start of a new contract; goals and benchmarks are established collaboratively by the client and Hospital Physician Partners with an emphasis on individual physician performance as well as departmental performance. “We look at all aspects of criteria which determine Emergency Department performance; patient throughput, left without being seen, time to provider, length of stay, etc. This data is discussed with hospital administration in regular meetings and is also accessible through a dedicated performance dashboard customized for each hospital.”






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Hospital Physician Partners maintains an ongoing physician education program, providing both internal and external opportunities for performance training, specifically as it applies to patient satisfaction. "Patient satisfaction, of course, is the cornerstone in any hospital experience," says Schillinger.

Documentation and customer service training is also a key component of the company's ongoing education program. "Our goal is to hire physicians who not only are dedicated to clinical excellence and a great patient experience, but understand the importance of accurate documentation. As with hospitals, individual performance results are shared with physicians as part of Hospital Physician Partners ongoing performance improvement program. That's a staple of our process," stated Schillinger."

### KEEPING THEIR EDGE

The company experienced record growth in 2009 with the addition of 26 new contracts. "While our company continues to grow with operations in 23 states, we're still small enough to be responsive and address the needs of our clients on a one-on-one basis," says Schillinger.

"We may not solve every problem, but we will address every problem, whether an external or internal issue," says Schillinger. "Our ability to move quickly and efficiently and to influence change when it matters is very powerful. The larger you grow as a company, the greater that challenge becomes. That's something we've got to be able to hold on to, to keep setting us apart from the competition. We have to keep the ability to respond at a local level with real answers."

**BY T.M. SIMMONS**



## OAKBEND MEDICAL CENTER



The largest full service healthcare facility in Fort Bend County, Texas, opened its doors on January 15, 1950 as the Polly Ryon Memorial Hospital. It is now OakBend Medical Center, a two hospital system with a combined total of 250 beds and a full range of medical services.

"We have been in this community for almost 60 years and have watched our community grow from a population less than 100,000 to 530,000 residents," says Joe Freudenberger, CEO. "We are one of the fastest growing counties in the United States—third largest, last I checked—and we have tremendous opportunities. We've seen a huge increase in the level of interest in Fort Bend County in the last ten years and have three competing acute care facilities in our area."

The hospital has 250 physicians on staff and 600 employees. They have approximately 2,000 emergency room visits and 550 to 600 admissions per month. The hospital provides a full range of specialty services, including cardiac, and is the only level III trauma center in the county. They also have a dedicated pediatric unit and level II nursery.

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