



Fast Five with Dr. Betsy Johnson

President & CEO, MaineHealth Accountable Care Organization, MD, MS

Welcome to Fast Five—our monthly feature that spotlights an individual connected with the MaineHealth ACO. This month we had a chance to catch up with Betsy Johnson for five quick questions.

Q: It was a little over a year ago that the MMC PHO, Community Physicians of Maine and the ACO combined to create a single organization known as the MaineHealth ACO. What changes have occurred in the last twelve months that you think are most significant to the ACO and its participants?

A: Much has changed this year by virtue of becoming a single organization. We have focused on delivering more streamlined, centralized, and coordinated services. Our excitement in January 2016 to become a united MaineHealth ACO has led to new opportunities in meeting the needs of our ACO participants. We have worked to organize our teams -- such as performance improvement advisors and care managers -- by regions, with specific improvement advisors, care managers, and coaches assigned to each region. That helps to build familiarity and trust since participants now see the same performance advisors and care managers consistently.

Another significant advancement has been the process to assess, choose, and procure a new technology solution for Population Health Management. After months of careful research and testing, we recently decided to contract with Arcadia Healthcare Solutions, a powerful new population health management solution for participants. As we all know, excellence in data quality and analytics is the foundation for any population health management program. Being a single organization allowed us to have an approach to the RFP process that brought in the voices of a broad range of providers and key stakeholders, in a cohesive process, that might not have been possible separately. That led, I think, to a better decision-making process with exciting results. Our goal with this new technology is to allow our participants to:

- provide proactive patient-centered care by closing gaps in care, identifying at-risk patients, providing data analytics and predictive modeling and engaging patients,
- identify and manage variations in care,
- improve quality measurement and performance,
- achieve success in value-based contracting through financial modeling, and,
- aggregate disparate data.

We've seen new clinical initiatives develop over the last year, as well. In January 2016, the Value Oversight Committee identified COPD as an area of improvement opportunity and as the ACO we were able to quickly develop and implement a new COPD initiative. As many of you may know COPD was the 3rd leading cause of death in the United States in 2013. You also may be aware that patients with COPD have high emergency room rates, and that Maine is substantially above the national average. Maine also has a high smoking rate, which is the leading cause of COPD. As a system we have an opportunity to improve our processes related to screening, diagnosing, and providing evidenced-based treatment and management for our patients with COPD.

We believe we can achieve greater success improving the care for patients with COPD by applying our multiple resources to a specific chronic disease with a defined scope. The goal of this initiative is to ensure the integration of work being done across our system. As an integrated ACO, it is easier to deliver on such complex initiatives.

An important new Board committee developed out of the integration of the ACO this year. The Physician Engagement and Alignment Committee (PEAC) is an energetic group of 16 physicians who were formerly the Board members of Community Physicians of Maine (CPM). This group is spearheading and leading important decisions that affect all of our participants, such as the financial distribution model and participant criteria. And importantly, PEAC has championed issues such as supporting the removal of tasks that are not patient centric, supporting provider development and education as well as driving forward the development of a new job opportunity for physicians called the ACO Physician Liaison Officer.

Finally, the ACO has been more focused on successful communication of our purpose and goals. In particular, the Value Oversight Committee worked hard this year to communicate clearly our contractual quality goals and the progress we're making. One very visible result of that work is the Quality Heat Map, an easy-to-read snapshot of the progress that each region, and the ACO as a whole, is making on reaching nine of our key contractual quality measure goals.

I think many of these things happened because we're a single, unified organization. As an integrated ACO, and not three disparate organizations, decision-making is easier, communication is better and ultimately the path we have to go down together is easier to find. "Fixing health care" and improving the experience for providers and patients alike is complex and daunting at times, but having the privilege to partner with 1,500 talented, dedicated providers to improve and transform our system is a gift I do not take lightly.

Q: Looking forward, what do you see as the greatest area of opportunity for the ACO?

A: Communication, integration, convener—the ACO plays an important role in serving these duties. Physicians and all health care providers are experiencing an ocean of change right now and that gives us an opportunity to act as a navigator. Our ACO team strives to stay ahead of these changes – the implementation of MACRA and MIPS is a good example – and to share valuable information and knowledge with our participants. We have tried to focus our newsletter articles, ACO Rounds, and webinars around the complexities of MACRA and MIPS as well as with the potential health care changes under the new administration to the Affordable Care Act.

Q: What is your top work priority this month?

A: My top priorities are staying abreast of the tumultuous changes in health care, supporting our dedicated ACO team in their endeavors, and delivering to our participants tools, information, data, and support that is valued, worthwhile and truly effects the provider and patient experience. My hope is that implementation of our new three-year strategic plan will guide us there. We've developed an Operational Plan that will hold us all accountable to delivering on our five strategic priorities: Value-based contracting, Data Analytics and Population Health Management, Cost & Quality Performance, Network Engagement & Accountability, and ACO Workforce Engagement and Development. We are very serious about our vision to be a nationally recognized network of providers delivering high quality, affordable care, and we can only do this in partnership with our participants.

Q: Switching gears here to a more personal question, what do you do to stay active?

A: My family is a whirlwind of activity that often sweeps me up. I have two boys, Sam and Jake, who I chase after - well, three boys if you count my husband. Its basketball season right now so I'm spending a lot of time cheering from the edge of the court but I also will take any opportunity to play one-on-one or shoots hoops in the driveway with my boys. Soon we'll shift into baseball season and my cheering will continue unabated. Being a working mom doesn't always leave me time for a regular exercise regimen. It's a juggling act and that ball gets dropped, more often than not. I'm sure a lot of my colleagues can relate.

Q: What's on your nightstand and on your playlist?

When I don't fall asleep within five minutes of picking up my book, the time to read at night is a treasured moment. Right now, I'm reading *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce and have recently finished *The Invention of Wings* by Sue Monk Kidd, and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. I never have to buy books as my mother and sister are avid readers and pass on to me an endless stream of new, old, and must-read books.

My house and my heart are always filled with music. With an 11-year old and a 14-year-old son, we can be jamming to the latest top 40, classic rock-and-roll, or slowing it down with classic jazz. My oldest son totally wishes he lived in the 80's with my husband and me so we get a heavy dose of 80's hits (how can you beat Prince, Madonna, and The Cure). Right now, my playlist features The Avett Brothers, Snow Patrol, Mumford & Sons, Madeleine Peyroux, Train, Nina Simone, and Eagle Eye Cherry.

Elizabeth H. Johnson, MD, MS joined the MaineHealth Accountable Care Organization (formerly MMC Physician-Hospital Organization) in 2013 as the CEO. With over 16 years of experience in healthcare leadership and 19 years of clinical practice experience in internal medicine, Betsy brings to MaineHealth ACO (MHACO) her passion for building and supporting a community model of health care that is value-based, integrated, and patient-centered. Through teamwork and partnership across the health system, Betsy has helped facilitate the recent transition from an established PHO to an integrated ACO advocating for a culture of accountable care, provider engagement, transparency, and achievement of the Triple Aim.