

Circle Health Insights

**Insights from Healthcare Leaders
on the Future of Care**

A curated series of high-impact conversations with leaders shaping the future of healthcare, distilled into actionable insights on value-based care, senior care, and system transformation.

The Journey that shaped *Value-Based Care*

Nicole Bradberry's 30+ year career across payers, providers, and ACOs highlights a deep understanding of how healthcare systems function. She began at Cigna and UnitedHealthcare, leading affordability initiatives that saved over \$1 billion. She later built early patient-centered care models—even before the Affordable Care Act—and founded companies advancing ACOs and value-based care. Today, she focuses on transforming senior and long-term care. Across this journey, one truth stands out: healthcare doesn't fail due to lack of innovation, it fails due to misaligned incentives.

The Core Problem: Engagement is Broken

Despite heavy investment, patient engagement has remained stuck at 10–12%. Payers struggled to influence behavior, and even strong programs failed, not because they were ineffective, but because patients weren't engaged. At the same time, physicians lacked the time to take on additional engagement responsibilities. As a result, the system failed to activate its two most critical stakeholders: patients and providers.

The Shift: From Payers to Providers to Teams

A key insight emerged: trust in healthcare lies with the physician, not the payer. Patients respond to doctors but doctors can't do it alone. The solution isn't to make physicians do more, but to support them better. This means placing primary care at the center, building teams around doctors, and enabling them with data, workflows, and incentives. When structured correctly, doctors can focus on clinical decisions, while teams handle coordination and engagement. Fee-for-service models and overloaded physicians, however, continue to limit impact.



Value-Based Care: The Turning Point

The Affordable Care Act marked a key shift by aligning incentives with outcomes instead of volume. This led to the rise of ACOs, rewarding providers for better outcomes at lower costs. **The focus moved from treating illness to managing population health—signaling a fundamental redesign of healthcare delivery**, still evolving today.



Nicole Bradberry

Value-Based Care Growth Strategist

Insights, Trends & Actionable Takeaways

Why the Transition is Hard

Healthcare today sits in a hybrid state, part fee-for-service, part value-based forcing providers into fragmented workflows. The real challenge isn't lack of tools, but how they're used. Transition mechanisms like bridge codes are often treated as short-term revenue opportunities, when they should be enabling long-term transformation. The shift only works when systems are redesigned with the end goal in mind.

The Biggest Opportunity: Senior Care

Senior and long-term care is one of the most under-leveraged areas in healthcare. Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs), traditionally operating on thin margins, can fundamentally change their economics under value-based models by owning outcomes and participating in shared savings.

\$40M+ potential savings (10,000 patients)

\$80M+ potential savings (13,000 patients)

 **This is not cost-cutting, it is value creation.**

What Actually Reduces Costs

Cost reduction doesn't come from better billing—it comes from better care delivery. The biggest impact lies in reducing hospitalizations, preventing readmissions, improving post-acute care, and managing chronic conditions proactively. When care shifts upstream and becomes continuous, both outcomes and costs improve.

AI: The New Care Infrastructure

AI is emerging as the execution layer of healthcare. It enables large-scale patient engagement, automates routine interactions, identifies care gaps, and improves care coordination. By taking on operational complexity, AI allows care teams to focus where it matters most.

AI solves healthcare's biggest problem: execution at scale

The Future: Beyond Value-Based Care

Healthcare today is still largely reactive. The next shift will focus on root-cause care—integrating prevention, nutrition, early diagnostics, and lifestyle interventions. Value-based care is a critical step forward, but it is only the beginning of a much broader transformation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Engagement > Innovation

Success depends more on patient engagement than new solutions alone

Support Doctors, Don't Overload Them

Strong care teams matter more than adding responsibilities

Incentives Drive Behavior

System outcomes follow how incentives are designed

Senior Care = Biggest Opportunity

Long-term care is the next frontier for value creation

AI Enables Scale

AI + value-based care unlocks system-wide transformation

Healthcare is at an inflection point.

Real transformation will come not from isolated innovation, but from aligning incentives, empowering providers, and engaging patients. As value-based care and AI scale, the system has the opportunity to become more proactive, efficient, and truly patient-centered.