

Center for Consumer Choice in Health Care (CCCHC)

VISION: *Every health care decision is informed by individual preferences regarding benefits, risks, and price.*

Why Is “Consumer Choice” a Critical Systems Issue?

More than 85% of all health care activities are managed by providers outside the formal delivery system by the individual “consumer” of care. In the vast majority of instances, individuals choose whether to seek care (or not), which doctor to see (or not), whose advice to follow (or not), and which medications to take (or not). When actively involved in making choices about care, patients experience fewer errors, fewer unnecessary procedures, and higher satisfaction. When incentivized, consumers also spend less while seeking higher value. Historically, the individual has been passive, underutilized, or excluded from choices about care in a system that overcomplicates and sometimes hides useful data about safety, price, and quality. In the face of mounting economic pressure in public and private systems, no one can afford to ignore the transformative potential of informed, empowered consumers.

What Are Our Core Strategies for Addressing This Work?

The overarching objective of the CCCHC is to identify and promote systems-level structures and incentives that readily incorporate consumer preferences into all health care choices. This broad strategy is supported with more specific research, demonstration, and dissemination aims.

- ▲ The **research aim** of the Center is to identify and understand the myriad factors that promote or impede incorporating consumer preferences regarding benefits, risks, and price into the health care decisionmaking process.
- ▲ The **demonstration aim** of the Center is to seek out and secure real-world opportunities to test key principles, strategies, and Altarum-developed tools for putting the individual consumer at the center of health care decisions.

- ▲ The **dissemination aim** is to position the Center as an active adviser and provider of technical assistance to communities, agencies, and employers that are exploring opportunities to better promote consumer choice in the health care decisionmaking process. The Center issues peer-reviewed research reports, articles, and presentations of value to the broader community.

How Will the Center’s Work Contribute to Broader Systems Change?

One critical means by which systems change is “pervasive information.” To this end, the Center will be creating a concise set of indices that measure consumer choice trends in health care decisionmaking. The set will be widely available in the health care marketplace. Once established, these indices will become familiar metrics in the health care industry, thus shaping how the industry perceives and reacts to consumer influence in the market.

Who Will Benefit From This Work?

The most immediate beneficiaries of the Center’s work will be consumers and both public and private payers. Successfully mobilized to ask more informed questions about their care, consumers have the greatest potential for improving the quality of the care that they receive at reduced cost. Because health care cost increases are often passed on to consumers in the form of premium increases or increased cost sharing, cost reduction can benefit consumers and payers alike. Additionally, care delivery systems that work aggressively to understand and meet consumer preferences can establish leadership positions in their respective markets.

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Brief History

The CCCHC, one of four Critical Systems Issues research centers within Altarum Institute, is a vehicle for developing greater understanding, expertise, and leadership in an area of critical importance to the health of the nation. Altarum has made a multimillion-dollar funding commitment to support these centers and seeks additional funds from foundations, government grants, and other sources to support their work. continued on other side

Why Is Altarum Uniquely Positioned to Do This Work?

Altarum has decades of experience providing objective research and analysis to federal and state government clients on health care quality. That work has allowed the Institute to gain a unique perspective on what data sources are and are not of value to consumers as they navigate choices between providers, hospitals, and procedures. The Institute's internally and externally funded work measuring health care cost growth, coupled with its deep understanding of reimbursement systems, has afforded the Institute deep insight into the tools and incentives that must be created to better support consumers in health care decisionmaking. Furthermore, we developed the Altarum Consumer Engagement Scale (ACE), and twice each year we conduct a survey of consumer opinions about topics in health care. Survey subjects include consumers' preferred role in health care decisions, sources of information about health, important factors in selecting providers, and other perceptions about the quality and cost of health care.

Altarum Consumer Engagement Scale (ACE)

ACE is a concise health consumer survey that measures aspects of engagement, including decisionmaking, self-care, and care navigation. Altarum developed ACE with the support of Safeway Health and the survey is being used in a variety of settings including large employers, clinical settings and a national Web panel. Our research shows that the ACE measure is highly correlated with health care utilization (claims data), biometric measures of health, medication adherence, and information-seeking behavior among other measures. ACE provides a reliable and affordable way for organizations to measure the engagement level of patients or populations in order to inform consumer engagement strategy, compare engagement levels to benchmarks and monitor over time, and design and tailor communications and programs for greater impact.

Leadership

Chris Duke, PhD



Dr. Chris Duke is a Senior Analyst with Altarum Institute's Survey and Patient Engagement Research Group and has been with Altarum since 2011. With a background in social psychology, statistics, and research methodology, Dr. Duke's research specialty is in understanding patient engagement and satisfaction.

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