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What is Intermountain Health doing in the space to improve the lives of those living with mental health and substance use challenges?

In order to meet the surging demand for behavioral health services and supports, Intermountain Health has developed a bold approach to addressing this crisis. By merging understanding of the consumer experience, evolving services to match the best evidence-based and evidence-informed practices available and delivering care and supports as early in

the treatment course as possible, Intermountain Health is committed to doubling the number of patients to whom we provide behavioral healthcare in our communities by the end of 2024. Relatedly, we are also committed to reducing the number of suicides in our communities.

Achieving this goal will involve a strategic effort to address many different challenges, including focusing on equity in behavioral healthcare delivery and enhancing innovative practices. Additionally, central to achieving this goal is understanding the consumer-patient experience for those who are living with mental health and substance use challenges with a strong interest in understanding how we fashion our systems to be as frictionless to access and consumer-friendly as possible.

By leveraging a variety of different evidence-based and evidence-informed practices with a focus on shared decision making, we place the consumer-patient at the forefront of our clinical design process. We are also committed to fully eradicating



long-held issues of stigma and extending our reach as a healthcare system to our community partners to develop an ecosystem of behavioral healthcare.

What barriers need to be overcome to improve access to mental healthcare?

Over the past several years, particularly accelerated by the pandemic, a significant increase in mental health and substance use-related concerns has become evident, leading to an enormous strain on the behavioral health system and a lack of resources for patients who desperately need them. Challenges such as navigating to the right care at the right place at the right time and clinician matching have always been present, but the recent increase in mental health care needs has pushed our system of behavioral healthcare in the US to a breaking point. However, there are important learnings from these challenges as this reality is forcing innovation and

creativity in addressing the need. Additionally, as more individuals live with mental health and substance-related concerns, stigma can decrease as awareness increases. Promoting education in the spirit of encouraging informed choice by every consumer in every aspect of their often complex behavioral healthcare journey is essential.

What is on the horizon for clinical innovations in mental healthcare?

Innovations in digital behavioral healthcare delivery, digital therapeutics and emerging technologies will help to address the burgeoning mental health crisis and provide novel and creative means of delivering care to patients more efficiently, thereby increasing their options for how they receive care and improving engagement, retention and overall outcomes.

As a system, however, we also must concentrate on more basic innovations in



how we deliver behavioral healthcare, with a focus on measurement-informed and outcomes-driven care as well as improving access to evidence-based and evidence-informed practice across the treatment spectrum. Clinician burnout must be addressed as well through a systematic analysis and understanding of the drivers of compassion fatigue and empathic failures with intentional action taken to address each of those drivers in the service of supporting our clinician caregivers and improving overall patient outcomes and satisfaction. Eliminating extra steps in the care of patients and providing clinical tools easily to providers will also assist in this effort as we maximize the critical value of each of our providers.

How has the behavioral healthcare space evolved over the last year?

Interest in addressing our behavioral health crisis, some would even call the new pandemic, has never been greater.

Over the last year, in particular, emerging coalitions ranging from politicians, policy institutes, tech entrepreneurs, traditional and novel healthcare companies, consumers, advocates and community agencies writ large among many others are forming to address this need. Never in my career have I seen so much synergy and enthusiasm to address such a complex issue. We must harness this energy and goodwill to make a real difference in the lives of those who need our help, particularly those who are in need but have never accessed behavioral healthcare.

What are you looking forward to at the Future of Mental Healthcare Summit?

This summit embodies the spirit of the coalitions needed to solve the crisis in front of us, and I am privileged to have the opportunity to be part of this community as we all look towards a future very different from our current experience.