

# Many Entities Collaborate to Achieve Quality and Value at Geisinger Health System



**Getting the most value from every dollar while delivering high-quality patient care** is the mantra driving decisions at medical institutions today. At Geisinger Health System, an award-winning health services organization in Pennsylvania, an integrated delivery model supports an all-encompassing quality mandate initiated by founder Abigail Geisinger to strive for perfection, or in her words, “make my hospital right; make it the best.”

At Geisinger, teams of clinical, administrative and operational personnel leverage medical technology and health information to deliver better care at lower cost. Suppliers such as Boston Scientific join in to help the organization fulfill its goals.

## SERVING PATIENTS EXCEEDINGLY WELL BRINGS DOWN COSTS

Adoption of Geisinger’s ProvenCare® model, along with use of electronic medical records, has enabled clinicians to take a holistic approach with every patient. According to Michael J. Komar, M.D., FACP, who has operational, educational and quality oversight for gastroenterology and hepatology, “Forty percent of our incentive compensation is linked to quality.”

“Physicians are encouraged to identify and address care gaps as part of their bi-annual initiatives. Providing timely access to care, and identifying patients who need to be seen preemptively, can lead to improved care at a lower cost,” says Dr. Komar.

In the gastrointestinal endoscopy practice, where up to 26,000 procedures are performed annually, the focus is on applying differentiated technologies to deliver patient outcomes and procedural efficiencies. One key to making this approach successful is Boston Scientific, the department’s primary supplier of endoscopy stents, clips, and other medical devices.

“When we talk about costs of devices, technology and procedures, etc., our calculation is based on what’s going to help our patients,” says David L. Diehl, M.D., FACP, FASGE, director of endosonography in Geisinger’s Center for Advanced Endoscopic Research and Training. “The cost issues are considered but the goal is to provide what’s necessary for optimal patient care.”

According to Scott Singer, operations manager of Gastroenterology Services, the challenge is to make technology decisions objectively. New products are evaluated by three indicators, with patient outcomes being the first. “Is it better for the patient? What’s the user’s (doctor or nurse) take on it? What’s the financial impact?” he says.

“Having the right tools in place can mitigate the need to perform a second procedure, saving the patient time, aggravation and potential risk while providing cost savings,” according to Dr. Diehl. As an



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Operations Manager of  
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example, he cites the use of metal biliary stents instead of plastic stents. “Numerous studies have shown that metal stents for biliary stenting not only are cost effective but also just medically better,” he says. Dr. Diehl also points to the potential benefits of using two guide wires with different characteristics during ERCP. “The point is to achieve cannulation, and if it takes a second wire, then it’s worth the small additional investment,” he says.

#### EVALUATION COMMITTEES WEIGH CLINICAL OUTCOMES AND SAVINGS

To acquire new devices, clinicians in high-volume practices like GI, ER and cardiac surgery must present a value proposition before a Clinical Use Evaluation (CUE) committee consisting of both clinical and administrative representatives. Mr. Singer, a CUE committee member, indicates the committee performs due diligence and does not automatically rubber-stamp proposals. He says he challenges clinicians and pushes hard for evidence of “significant clinical advantage.”

To justify a new device, a product-use trial is established before full implementation is permitted. But not all devices make it to trial. “If a device doesn’t have a clinical advantage and I don’t see any major financial plus for doing it, I’ll try not to even trial it. Don’t waste everybody’s energy at a trial,” Mr. Singer says.

The CUE process allows for a careful evaluation of purchase programs. Mr. Singer says cost analysts from the purchasing department’s supply chain services may look at CUE decisions in a different light and point out the macro impact. “It may not benefit your department to switch to this, but it would benefit the broader system. The potential is to move the institution to more favorable positions in the supplier’s purchase programs. By incorporating that product we will actually save money.” Boston Scientific works closely with Mr. Singer to determine the GI department’s usage needs and to provide needed products and programs at the best possible value.

#### SERVICE CONTRIBUTES CLEAR BENEFITS

Boston Scientific’s commitment to quality and value is punctuated by service. Hard data and ongoing analytical support help Geisinger track its progress on various programs.

**Inventory management** — a concern for Geisinger — is a challenge Boston Scientific has embraced creatively and successfully. “Working closely with Boston Scientific has allowed us to improve our inventory,” Dr. Komar says. “The company’s broad portfolio has created opportunities for us to carry less inventory, which falls right to the bottom line. We’ve realized savings of about a million dollars over the past three years,” Dr. Komar says.

**Physician best-practice sharing** also provided significant value to Dr. Diehl when Boston Scientific facilitated training on the SpyGlass® Direct Visualization System with an early adopter practitioner. Dr. Diehl was able to learn key practices for optimizing patient outcomes. He particularly appreciates Boston Scientific’s in-service attention to the nursing staff, “making sure they are completely comfortable and familiar with the range of devices and how to use them.”

Dr. Diehl believes Boston Scientific’s pursuit of excellence and value results in GI endoscopy product offerings that are medically, technologically and economically sound. “I can rely on Boston Scientific to bring solid engineering to the medical devices that I use. I’ve been very impressed with the company’s genuine commitment to improving existing devices and bringing important new ones to market,” he adds. “You know what you’re getting with the Boston Scientific brand and the company stands behind its products and services.”

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