

Bridges' new leader sees more opportunities for success

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Tom Boggs, president of Bridges Health Partners in Warrendale.

BRIDGES HEALTH PARTNERS



By Paul J. Gough – Reporter, Pittsburgh Business Times
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Bridges Health Partners, the joint venture on patient care between several independent hospital systems in southwestern Pennsylvania, has a new president.

Veteran health care executive [Tom Boggs](#) took the reins at the Warrendale-based clinically integrated network owned by Butler Health System, Excelsa Health System, St. Clair Hospital, and Washington Health System. Also new to the organization is Dr. Robert Zimmerman, an Excelsa Health physician who became Bridges' chief medical officer in January.

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[Boggs is no stranger to accountable care organizations, which are providers, hospitals and others that come together to keep patients healthy beyond the traditional fee-for-service system.](#)

He was president and CEO of Healthcare Solutions Network, a joint-venture ACO between two Cincinnati healthcare organizations, for four years. Before that he spent 14 years at Aultman Hospital in Canton, Ohio, rising to system SVP and president of its \$35 million multispecialty medical group.

In an interview with the Business Times, Boggs said he's looking forward to using his skills to build upon the success at the three-year-old Bridges. He said the strength of the four member organizations is vital. [Bridges has just completed its first year as an ACO under Medicare rules.](#)

Boggs has set upon refreshing Bridges' strategic plan while continuing to build the clinical relationships between the physicians at each of its partners. The idea is by coordinating care and best practices, the health systems' patients get better care with cost savings all around.

That's what an ACO is all about; Medicare has a shared savings program for providers that meet patient and financial savings goals.

"It's about giving the right care at the right place at the right time," said Zimmerman. Bridges' first year as an ACO showed savings although it's not clear whether it was enough to meet a 15 percent threshold.

Other areas of growth at Bridges and its health system partners are increasing integrated care, boosting the health of chronically ill patients and looking for other ways for the hospitals to partner.

Boggs said he'd be interested in expanding Bridges' value-based care deals with insurers. Bridges [struck a value-based deal](#) with Humana Inc. (NYSE: HUM) for Medicare Advantage patients.

"We have ongoing discussions with many of the (commercial insurer) payors ... but it has to fit with our strategic plan," Boggs said.

Also possible is an expansion of Bridges to other health systems and hospitals.

Through it all, Boggs said, the guiding principle for Bridges and its partners is providing quality low-cost care in an era where health care costs increase at a robust rate annually. Providing strong care will go a long way, he said.

"I'm a firm believer that quality will drive your (health system) finances," Boggs said.