

CAPG MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

John M. Kirk, CEO Pioneer Medical Group (PMG)



*John M. Kirk, CEO
Pioneer Medical Group (PMG)*

John Kirk has been the CEO of Pioneer Medical Group (PMG) since its founding in 2000. He began his career as an attorney in New Mexico, specializing in healthcare law. Along the way, John held executive management positions with St. Joseph Healthcare Corp. in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Sharp HealthCare in San Diego, California, and Physician Capital Partners in Fort Worth, Texas.

Here John relates the story of Pioneer Medical Group—past, present and future.

Prologue

The decade of the 1990s was a dark time for the medical community. Like warring clans, IPAs were taken over, bought and sold, then bought and sold again. Medical groups would form, expand, then crash and burn. It was a time when HMOs altered the landscape of patient care and insurance coverage, but no one was quite certain yet whether that was an improvement or a detriment.

During this period, I was working as a healthcare management consultant. In September 2000, I was at home in Santa Barbara when I got a call from a former employer, Medical Pathways. A new medical group was struggling to establish itself in Cerritos, I was told. The 54 doctors had essentially defected from another medical group, called KPC. In less than a month, they needed to locate, staff, and equip six clinics and get operations underway. Would I be willing to help? Sure, why not?

This was the prologue. The rest of the PMG story goes like this:

Chapter One – 2000-2002

Pioneer Medical Group opened its doors on Monday, October 2, 2000, with five clinics. The sixth opened two days later. I must say, Pioneer was an apt name for the new entity. PMG had—and still has—a frontier spirit, achieving success despite adversity. During our first two years in business, we were borrowing heavily from Downey Regional Hospital, the HMOs were taking their time transferring medical records from KPC, and KPC, of course, sued us. But we got through it all, and, by our 8th quarter, we began to turn a profit.

Chapter Two – 2002-2007

PMG started this period still deep in debt—approximately \$7.5 million in startup financing. Nevertheless, we were able to pay it off in full, ahead of schedule, and without sacrificing patient quality. In fact, for several years during this period we were named a “Top Performer” in Los Angeles County by the Integrated Healthcare Association using the criteria of clinical measures, IT development and patient satisfaction. The only other groups with this record are Kaiser Permanente, Healthcare Partners, the two groups associated with Cedars-Sinai and the UCLA Medical Group, all of which are either significantly larger than PMG and/or backed by huge institutions. We were also awarded “Elite” status in the CAPG Standards of Excellence program. I felt just like a proud papa!

Chapter Three – 2008-2009

Like many organizations, the Great Recession hit us rather hard. To make matters worse, it was during this time that PMG began transitioning to a paperless and filmless operation, which negatively affected productivity (but not quality of care). Finally, Downey Regional Medical Center had its own problems and cancelled all of its risk contracts with medical groups; and we just had to weather the storm.

Chapter Four – 2010-2012

Weather the storm we did. Over the past three years, PMG has once again turned the corner to get profitability back on track. Today, PMG has 50 providers operating in eight clinics in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. PMG provides care to over 60,000 patients through capitated enrollment as well as our fee-for-service line of business. Our strength in the marketplace made it possible for us to take advantage of an exciting opportunity, one that opens the book on a new chapter for PMG.

Chapter Five – 2013 and beyond

PMG has engaged in a strategic partnership with MED3000, a national leader in healthcare management, technology products and serv-

ices, to form a new practice management company called Eagle Medical Management, LLC, a MED3000 Company. Eagle Medical Management provides complete practice management services, including clinic staffing, accounting, billing and collections, human resources management, finance, IT support, contracting and managed care administration.

Initially PMG will be the only medical group supported by Eagle Medical Management. Going forward, we anticipate expanding to provide practice management services to other healthcare organizations, a development that we expect will produce enduring success. From chaotic beginnings to our latest evolution, I believe the story of Pioneer Medical Group is truly inspiring, and I am happy to have had the honor of playing a role.

John M. Kirk serves on the CAPG Board of Directors and is the Vice-Chair of CAPG's Public Policy Committee. ■

