

Getting the Best Healthcare for Your Family



John Hutchins is recognized as an industry-leading expert in the provision of high-caliber healthcare at a VIP level. John conceptualized and created the first international patient program, targeting affluent families around the world, at the Cleveland Clinic in 1986. John was then recruited to create Johns Hopkins Hospital's International Program, which grew to become the number one-rated international program in the world. In this interview, John explains how starting Pinnacle Care allowed him to realize his dream of the creation of a comprehensive, patient-centered healthcare service.

John, what led you to the vision of Pinnacle Care? After all, you were running a very successful international program that served 7,000 affluent international families a year at one of the country's most prestigious medical institutions, Johns Hopkins. Why would you leave that role to try to establish a company to provide a service that no one had been able to provide before?

While running the international program at Johns Hopkins and the Cleveland Clinic prior to that, it was clear you could do more for patients to help them restore, protect and enhance their health. By promoting the institution we were not always serving the patient's best interests. I wanted to be able to give a person the best options for early detection and then objective counsel on where and how to be treated, regardless of where the treatment would be provided. I believed it was possible to create a service that would put the patient first and craft a new model of healthcare delivery that allowed patients and their families to choose, through an informed decision-making process, the best approach and the best physician.

How did you go about creating this entirely new model of healthcare stewardship?

We began by going to the top physicians in America and asking them to participate. They accepted the offer, and were excited to participate in a process that favored the patient. These great physicians, most of them department chairs at top hospitals, joined our Medical Advisory Board to provide guidance and expertise to our Members.

The next step was to approach the top medical institutions in the country and ask if they would commit to provide special services and access to our Members. After significant consideration, and because they were interested in the caliber of our Members, they joined on too.

How does Pinnacle Care get these top physicians and Centers of Excellence to work so closely with its Members?

We found that many of the doctors who joined our Medical Advisory Board and medical providers network were frustrated with “the business of medicine”- reduced resources, reimbursement cuts, rushed office visits. Many of them just wanted to get back to providing superb care to patients. The new organization that we were putting together allowed them to do just that: practice medicine. Most physicians want to spend time with patients, so they can provide thorough, high-quality service. When a Pinnacle Care Member sees a physician, all of their medical records and pre-appointment paperwork are prepared in advance by us, and the Member arrives better informed and educated. The Pinnacle Care Team then follows up with the physician to obtain relevant data, and then we work with our Members to make sure that what was discussed was understood and that the appropriate follow-up will take place. Simply put, doctors like to work with our Members. Mind you, our work is funded solely through our Membership fees – there is no financial arrangement between us and the doctors and institutions. Objectivity is key to enabling us to help our Members get the best care.

How do you find the best? What does “the best” mean?

The “best” in medicine is a relative term, relative to the individual patient and their diagnosis, personality and preferences. Though our network has enabled us to determine the preeminent experts in specific diseases and medical issues, many other factors are taken into consideration when providing a Pinnacle Care Member with physician options. Our service is highly customized. One Member may prefer to see a female physician close to home for their medical issue, while another wants to see an expert thousands of miles from home. In the end, it is a combination of the physician’s credentials combined with the Member’s objectives and desired outcomes. Whatever they choose, through Pinnacle Care, they will get expedited access to the physician of their choice.

What do you say to someone who believes they already have the best doctors?

We hear this all the time. I tell a person that, in this era of specialization, no one Center of Excellence is the best across all specialties. Another way to look at this is to realize that the two most prevalent diseases in the United States are cancer and heart disease. The best center for many types of cancer is in Houston, Texas and the best center for heart disease is in Cleveland, Ohio. Furthermore, the two top-rated hospitals in this country are in Rochester, Minnesota and Baltimore, Maryland. Unless you’ve got VIP access to all those institutions for your family, you may well need Pinnacle Care. Obviously, for some situations a very good doctor will do, but for others, having the very best physician can have a significant impact on the outcome of the treatment.

What is happening today that makes something like Pinnacle Care necessary?

Our medical system is strained beyond its capacity, and even affluent patients and those heavily involved in medical philanthropy, are getting less and less service, and less time with their physician. Patients with serious illnesses like cancer are treated by multiple physicians, but there is no one person coordinating these activities. Poor communication leads to suboptimal care or even worse, medical errors that may kill you.

Pinnacle Care Members are accustomed to the best in all aspects of their lives. Why should they settle for less when it comes to their family's health? They now have a service available to them that will enable them to get better healthcare. The need has been recognized for some time. We were able to put all the pieces in place to address it.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of starting Pinnacle Care?

To be able to support Members and their loved ones through very difficult situations is a real blessing. When a person is dealing with a serious medical issue, there are multiple doctors and medications and appointments to manage, and being able to support the family by taking care of all these details allows the family to provide emotional support to one another. At the same time, making sure a family stays healthy, which is the lion's share of our service, is very rewarding too.

It has also been very gratifying to witness how some of our Members have benefited from complementary and alternative medicine. Our Members are increasingly integrating these treatments into their lives - to take care of everything from maintaining optimal health to lessening nausea from chemotherapy. It has been an incredible discovery process for me to learn about this other realm of medicine, and to help our Members identify credible practitioners and evidence-based treatments.

Can someone with a very serious or critical medical issue join Pinnacle Care?

Certainly. Our access to experts and to the latest in medical research and technology makes us well-equipped to act swiftly on our Member's behalf. It is incredibly exhausting and frustrating for a family member trying to manage a complex illness, but Pinnacle Care has the relationships and resources in place to confidently and efficiently manage the situation.

And while we help Members with very serious medical issues, we have found that it is far more advantageous for families to join Pinnacle Care when they are in relatively good health. The focus is on prevention, early detection and the family's long-term optimal health strategy. And the ability to collect each family member's medical records combined with a broad knowledge of the family ensures that when a serious situation or

medical emergency arises, we are prepared to help comprehensively, immediately. Having your medical records available in a medical emergency is extremely important. When a family joins Pinnacle Care, we sit down to talk about their health - where they are, where they'd like to be, what worries them. From there, we set goals to make sure they are receiving aggressive preventative care, including regular executive physicals. We help them with their diet, their exercise, finding a trusted primary care physician, etc.

Is there something you provide to each and every Pinnacle Care Member, regardless of their state of health?

We all strive to provide every Member with incomparable peace of mind and convenience since they know that Pinnacle Care is managing all of the details regarding their health, or that Pinnacle Care is ready to help if they become ill. Pinnacle Care is truly a caring service that helps our Members live more enjoyable lives with their loved ones.

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Pinnacle Care provides private health management services to Members and their families. For more information, contact Ellen Maidman-Tanner, 410.752.1712 or ellen@pcistaff.com.