



Kaiser Daily Health Policy Report

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Coverage & Access

More U.S. Companies Offering Patient Advocate Services in Their Health Care Plans

The Philadelphia Inquirer on Sunday examined patient advocates, who “navigate the labyrinthine health care system, identifying specialists, translating doctorese and negotiating insurance claims” for patients. Health Advocate, which is contracted by employers nationwide, has increased its client list from 10 businesses in 2002 to 1,700 today, the Inquirer reports. Large corporations pay a \$1.25 monthly fee per employee, and small businesses pay \$4.95 per employee. The patient advocates are often nurses and mostly counsel over the phone, although some might accompany

patients on doctor visits. Advocates “attempt to find the best doctors for what ails employees, and employers pay for fewer wrong diagnoses and unnecessary procedures,” according to the Inquirer. Many physicians are willing to accept advocates’ participation in patient care. “This is a very, very nice way to avoid getting sued,” Mehmet Oz, vice chairman of surgery at New York Presbyterian-Columbia University and co-author of *You: The Smart Patient*, said. Oz added, “Advocates are asking very sophisticated questions. I find that an empowered patient does better.” Betty Long—founder of Guardian Nurses, which provides patient advocates—said, “You wouldn’t think of going into the legal system without a lawyer. You wouldn’t want to go into the medical system without an advocate. It’s so overwhelming.”

(Kadaba, Philadelphia Inquirer, 8/27).

Advocates guide patients through medical morass.

“We get a lot of calls where people are lost in the system,” said Marty Rosen, a cofounder of Health Advocate in Plymouth Meeting. “We’ll make the connection. We know the health-care system, the ins and outs.”

He should. Rosen and his partners are former U.S. Healthcare and Aetna executives. Yes, he sees the irony of having to untangle problems blamed on his former industry. But, he says, “Who better than us?”

Health Advocate, which is contracted by employers nationwide, has seen its list of clients explode from 10 businesses in 2002 to 1,700 today. The company’s services are now accessible to 6 million people, Rosen said.