

**Greenville News OpEd**  
**authors: Dick Wilkerson/Valinda Rutledge**  
**placement Sunday, August 9, 2009**

**TRANSFORMATION  
in Health System Lies in  
Employer and Healthcare Provider Relationship**

Healthcare reform is at the absolute forefront of our national agenda, yet it seems that only the symptoms of this problem -- escalating costs, misused emergency services -- are generating the headlines.

The deeper perspective and the opportunity to effect real change in our national healthcare system occurs at another level – the fundamental relationship between employers and healthcare providers to improve quality of care and well-being for the people they serve.

To add historical context, health coverage/insurance offered by employers evolved and grew from the post-WWII employment boom as a way for companies to attract and retain employees. This was and continues to be the “transactional” model – if or when an employee needs a doctor or hospital, the company pays according to their plan. For a number of reasons that model has also resulted in each of the key stakeholders pursuing vastly different incentives toward their own success. As a major employer and a leading healthcare provider, Michelin and Bon Secours St. Francis Health System want to ensure that the patient remains at the center of the discussion and that their health and treatment are the priorities.

One of the most profound changes we can and must make as we consider a new vision for our health system is a dramatic shift to align employers and health providers with shared incentives resulting in healthy, productive employees who can realize not just their own dreams, but can fully contribute to their companies.

This is a concept that goes beyond mere reform – ***it is transformation in healthcare.***

Tomorrow, in Greenville, an incredibly exciting step towards that transformation and a new era of healthcare begins with the launch of St. Francis Institute of Chronic Health and a unique collaboration between Michelin and St. Francis.

At the core of the Institute is a model program with a singular focus: enable people with pre- or chronic diabetes to achieve their optimal health. While this sounds fundamental – the current reality is that many patients have to self-navigate through complex insurance and healthcare systems that pose unintended but real-life barriers which compete with a goal of “better health.”

The Michelin / St. Francis program presents a new equation where the “value” of healthcare will be defined by positive health outcomes for the patients with shared responsibility borne equally between employer and provider that includes rewarding healthy lifestyles.

At the core of this innovative approach is the pioneering research and work in value-based health care from Harvard Professor Michael E. Porter and University of Virginia Professor Elizabeth Teisberg, set forth in their book *Redefining Health Care*. Their compelling revelation is that better health is more than a personal goal -- it is the foundation to healthcare financial stability. This is particularly true as employers look at the impact of chronic diseases such as diabetes within their workforce, where preventing or lowering the progression of the disease dramatically reduces complications like kidney failure, blindness, amputations and heart attacks.

This visionary collaboration between our two leading organizations has already gained national attention. We are honored that Mr. Jeff Immelt, Chairman and CEO of General Electric Company, will join us tomorrow as we formally introduce the St. Francis Institute of Chronic Health.

We challenge each business and community leader to explore, discover, and most importantly- take action. Initiate this same discussion within your company with your healthcare provider at the table. Look to your own partnerships and relationships --begin the difficult but breakthrough process that is true healthcare reform to improve the lives of the people in our companies and communities.

-- xxx --

Valinda Rutledge is CEO for Bon Secours St. Francis Health System.

Dick Wilkerson is the Chairman and President, Michelin, North America, Inc.