

CrestPoint Branches Out

Firm Offering Regionally-Based Medicare Advantage Plan

By Scott Robertson

Mountain States Health Alliance is deepening its foray into the field of insurance. CrestPoint Health, an affiliated company of MSHA through Integrated Solutions Health Networks (ISHN), began serving MSHA team members over a year ago and has been making self-funded coverage plans available to large employers since. Now, CrestPoint is ready to make its first offerings to individuals.

"In the fall of this year, we will begin marketing a CrestPoint Medicare Advantage product," says Rob Slattery, ISHN CEO. "We're referring to that as 'Your Medicare Advantage plan, brought to you by CrestPoint Health.'

"We'll technically have two products. They follow our philosophy of 'Mind, Body and Spirit' in the sense that one product will be named 'Mind' and the other 'Body,'" says Slattery. "We'll start to market 'Body' and 'Mind' in October. We have to wait till then because we have a contract with the federal government, so we have certain time-frames in which we can start to put the material and the information out into the community and in front of the consumer. It's a very short window. We begin in October and end in mid-December."

The fact that MSHA is in the insurance business at all shows how much the healthcare landscape has changed in recent years and is, in fact, still changing. CrestPoint began serving patients in the region in July 2011.

"CrestPoint came to be as a result of our looking into the future as the landscape of the healthcare environment was changing," says Slattery. "It has been changing both as a result of healthcare reform and, more importantly, because of the move toward more integrated models of care. That change introduced new reimbursement methodologies and products that would move the delivery of healthcare toward a more integrated, evidence-based practice of medicine.

"As part of our ten-year visioning process at MSHA," says Slattery, "we really saw an opportunity to take the delivery of care and

integrate it with the management of health benefits and wellness benefits associated with a population. So we created CrestPoint Health to be that vehicle. CrestPoint would be where we could create products that are insurance-based, sell those in the marketplace, and integrate those with the new care models that we were developing within the healthcare enterprise."



Rob Slattery (Courtesy MSHA)

The first population served by CrestPoint was MSHA team members and their dependents. "That was about 15,000 total lives," says Slattery.

"One of the challenges that we found right out of the gate was that we were starting fresh as a health plan locally. We really had to develop the rapport with the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance to acquire licensure to operate as an insurance company within our community. So that posed a challenge as we created this new company, making sure the state was comfortable that we were complying with their regulations and rules."

But just as MSHA was adjusting to new

realities in the healthcare marketplace, so too was the state. "We approached the state two days after Christmas," remembers Slattery. "We were approved for our license shortly after mid-February. So it took us about six weeks. It was very good. One of the things that was most encouraging when we met those folks up in Nashville was that they said, 'We don't know whether this will create any new or better value or not. But we feel that in order to see that we continue to have innovation in the state of Tennessee, we have to support the efforts of organizations like yours, so we can insure that we don't end up with a one-size-fits-all solution.'"

One of the major selling points CrestPoint was able to push when explaining its plan to the state was the fact that it would be of, by and for the region. "When we put this company together, we did it in a way that we could keep all those dollars that are generated through our products and services local," says Slattery. "That allows us to invest back into providing better care. That in turn allows us to keep people healthier and well. They have better outcomes and they generate more wealth because they're not putting all of that money toward receiving healthcare. That's what really differentiates us. We're here for the people that live in our community."

"Because many of our team come from very large, nationally-recognized companies," says Slattery, who himself came from BlueCross/BlueShield, "I think what ultimately really drives us is a common purpose to help people prosper. By prosper, I mean in health and wellness, but also from a wealth perspective because we understand that the cost of healthcare is so expensive."

Bringing CrestPoint from being a concept in a ten-year planning meeting to being an active seller of Medicare Advantage products was a process, not an event. Mountain States Health Alliance's team roster was not exactly flush with insurance salesmen, for example. So Slattery invited over 100 of the region's top brokers and agents to a luncheon at which they were introduced to the company and its

offerings.

“One of the things that we knew would resonate with the brokers and agents that live and work in our community was our local value proposition,” says Slattery. “Being here within the community, having the providers sponsoring our efforts – the hospitals, the physicians, the specialists.

“Those brokers and agents provided us with valuable feedback as to what they saw in the marketplace and where they thought we could differentiate ourselves,” says Slattery. “So through those efforts in engaging those individuals we have been able to credential over 150 new agents and brokers that will sell our products. They are commissioned for each sale.”

The brokers and agents who will be selling CrestPoint plans to individual Medicare patients have already undergone significant education and training regarding exactly what differences a locally-based company will provide. “We consider them to be an extension of us,” says Slattery. “They understand our products and our company. We look at those folks as part of our team, and given that they do live and work in our community and participate in different community-based

organizations as well as sitting next to us on Sundays in church, we felt that this was a very community-oriented, community-sponsored plan and we’re glad to have them working with us.”

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While some amount of uncertainty remains as to what the future of healthcare reform will look like, depending on the outcome of the November elections, CrestPoint is ready to move forward regardless, says

Slattery. “As we look into the future, specifically as the result of some of the new things that are being rolled out as part of healthcare reform, we will be launching an exchange-based product. Our plans are to roll that product out in both Tennessee and Virginia. That will be on an individual exchange. That will be something that individuals that have no, or low insurance for their medical and pharmacy benefits will be able to go onto that exchange or work with a broker and agent to buy a product that best meets their needs.”

And while CrestPoint’s future plans call for significant growth, Slattery says the company will not overextend itself. To that end, CrestPoint is only offering its Medicare Advantage products in an eight county area of Northeast Tennessee (Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington counties) in its initial roll-out. “Our plans are to grow into every corner of the 29-county community that Mountain States serves,” says Slattery. “But for everyone to feel comfortable that we’re doing the job right, we are taking a very methodical approach to this. We want to meet the needs of those who elect to do business with us and build their trust.” ¹³

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