



BRIDGES PROFILE

Wayne Rawlins, M.D.

Vice President and National Medical Director, Racial and Ethnic Equality Initiatives, Aetna

What influenced your decision to enter health care? What other factors have shaped your career choices along the way?

My father is a dentist, and he really instilled in me the value of service to others. I also have several family members and friends who were doctors, so as a child, I was surrounded by role models. I received my medical degree from the University of Connecticut in 1980, and I completed an internal medicine residency and chief residency at the University of Rochester in New York. Prior to joining Aetna in 1997, I was a physician manager with the Northeast Permanente Medical Group for 13 years, treating a wide variety of patients in a busy primary care practice.

At Aetna, I have served in several senior clinical operational roles including head of business planning and reporting for national medical services and the regional medical director for Aetna's northeast region, providing access to health care services for more than two million members. I also have led initiatives on end-of-life care, services for veterans and cost-management.

In my current role as vice president and national medical director of racial and ethnic equality initiatives, I lead a team that identifies health care disparities within Aetna's membership and the communities we serve. We conduct research within Aetna and with academic institutions to build programs and activities to improve access to culturally appropriate care and to decrease disparities.



- ▶ Board Member, Institute for Diversity in Health Management
- ▶ Member, National Medical Association
- ▶ Member, American College of Physicians
- ▶ Member, American College of Physician Executives

What's the greatest challenge you've faced in your career?

My biggest challenge was giving up clinical medicine and transitioning to an administrator role. I have a deep love for clinical medicine and taking care of patients. Part of my decision process was that, in a practice, I could take care of a few thousand patients at one time. But, at a major health plan, my practice becomes millions of patients. At Aetna, I have the ability to influence the quality and outcomes of many more patients, which has buoyed me during my career.

How can health care embrace the leadership imperative to increase diversity among health care managers?

Health care is going through a tectonic change that is affecting all of its stakeholders, including hospi-

tals, physicians, insurers, employers and patients. The focus is changing toward service integration, quality outcomes and value with a goal of having a more workable and simpler health care system centered on consumers. Like many large-scale transitions, it won't be easy. But it will be worth it as we focus on things that will improve the health and wellness of our people and communities.

What advice would you give to racially and ethnically diverse individuals seeking to enter health care administration?

First, I believe a career in health care is a good career. It is a critical space for people of diverse communities to be in. I tell people to build their personal brand based on their knowledge, skills and, most importantly, their integrity and values. Mentorship also is very important. When I talk about my medical experience, I tell people that I learned the knowledge in books and medical school. But I learned how to be a doctor and take care of patients by shadowing and working with senior physicians and people who were my mentors.

What do you see as the health care field's greatest challenge in the coming years?

In 20-30 years, the minority community will become the majority population in the U.S. To meet the needs of this growing diverse population, it's critical that people in health care, and in any professional role, are able to see the world through that lens. Having people with different perspectives, viewpoints and cultural backgrounds allows you to have a much broader view of solutions to address the critical problems that we face. I think diversity and inclusion are the foundation to being able to get to those answers. In addition, diversity and inclusion strategies will be a business imperative for continued success going forward.