

# TAKING THE LEAD IN HEALTHCARE ADVANCEMENT – ROANOKE COUNTY VA (USA)

## Przejęcie inicjatywy w postępie opieki zdrowotnej w hrabstwie Roanoke, Wirginia, Stany Zjednoczone

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Elected Member-Currently Serving 4th Term;  
Re-presenting – Glenvar – Northside – Catawba areas  
of Roanoke County; Board of Supervisors, Roanoke  
County, Virginia, USA

**A-** przygotowanie projektu badania (study design), **B-** zbieranie danych (data collection), **C-** analiza statystyczna (statistical analysis), **D-** interpretacja danych (data interpretation), **E-** przygotowanie maszynopisu (manuscript preparation), **F-** opracowanie piśmiennictwa (literature search), **G-** pozyskanie funduszy (funds collection)

### Summary

Healthcare services and the expected need for expansion has fueled the need to take a look into the immediate future for the Roanoke Valley. Building a healthy environment for the citizens of the valley does not only include bricks and mortar. The facilities are very important, but a healthy community begins from within. Roanoke County has taken the initiative to institute a wellness center for our 900 plus employees. We have always been supportive of our local healthcare providers, Carilion Clinic and Lewis-Gale Medical Center, but taking a pro-active part will lead to many positive results.

We have already realized a reduction in healthcare claims and a corresponding decrease in the overall payment of these. Our wellness center operation has resulted in less time loss from work due to illness, an overall healthy workforce and most importantly an educated employee regarding their personal healthcare situation. We realize that a healthy workforce is a more productive one.

Healthcare education and preventive care programs such as eating healthy foods and exercise translates into lower health insurance premiums for individuals as well as the County.

**Keywords:** health care providers, wellness center, ambulatory services

### Streszczenie

Opieka medyczna w obrębie doliny Roanoke i związane z nią oczekiwania wymuszają potrzebę przyjrzenia się tej dziedzinie usług w najbliższej przyszłości. Stworzenie odpowiedniego środowiska dla mieszkańców tego obszaru nie oznacza tylko użycia cegieł i zaprawy murarskiej. Owszem, ośrodki opieki medycznej są ważne, ale zdrowa społeczność to coś więcej. Hrabstwo Roanoke wybudowało ośrodek promocji zdrowia dla ponad 900 pracowników. Wspieraliśmy już istniejące ośrodki opieki medycznej takie jak Klinika Carillon i Centrum Medyczne imienia Lewis'a i Gale'a, ale podjęcie bardziej aktywnych działań będzie prowadzić do osiągnięcia jeszcze lepszych wyników.

Osiągnęliśmy zmniejszenie liczby wierzytelności za usługi medyczne i co za tym idzie znaczne zmniejszenie kosztów opieki zdrowotnej. Działanie naszego ośrodka promocji zdrowia przyniosło wiele pozytywnych skutków, w tym zaoszczędziło czas tracony do tej pory na leczenie chorób, zwiększyło liczbę zdrowych, zdolnych do pracy pracowników, i co najważniejsze, uświadomiło ludziom w jakiej znajdują się sytuacji zdrowotnej i jakie są ich potrzeby w tym zakresie. Uważamy, że zdrowi pracownicy pracują lepiej.

Edukowanie w zakresie promocji zdrowia i programy profilaktyczne takie jak: jak się odżywiać zdrowo i zażywać ruchu przekładają się bezpośrednio na niższe koszty w zakresie usług medycznych w przeliczeniu na indywidualnych mieszkańców, a co za tym idzie niższe koszty ponoszone przez hrabstwo w tym zakresie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zapewnienie opieki medycznej, ośrodek promocji zdrowia, usługi medyczne

## Background

The Roanoke Region in southwest Virginia (USA) consists of five localities which includes approximately 340,000 citizens. Locally elected officials head up governments in Roanoke County, Roanoke City, Botetourt County, Salem City and Montgomery County.

The region is served by Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital and the Lewis-Gale Medical Center. Carilion Clinic is a not-for-profit healthcare organization based in Roanoke, VA. Roanoke County is central to this service, having a population of 96,000 citizens.

Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital is by far the largest and provides quality care for over 1 million Virginians in the southwest region of the state. Over 650 physicians representing more than 60 specialties work for Carilion, including 220 practice sites.

Some quick stats about Carilion include: 11,400 employees, primary care with 841,000 visits, 1,187 licensed beds, admissions 50,311, emergency department visits 182,900 and revenues of \$1.4 Billion (net).

Emergency care is handled by our local hospitals and urgent care facilities located all around the valley. In 2013 there was 182,300 emergency department visits just for the Carilion Clinic alone.

What you will find when you need medical attention

All across our area you will find an abundance of specialty care ambulatory services available, such as cardiology, orthopedic, neurology and many more. Patients suffering from COPD are benefitting from Carilion Clinic's transformative approach. Pulmonary care providers and family physicians are working more closely, and embracing new therapies and individual care strategies. The clinic is finding new ways to help patients catch their breath, and hold on to it.

Many patients are now taking more medications than ever before, which sometimes results in confusion and also a greater risk. There is now a program called Improving Health for At-Risk Rural Patients. This program connects doctors, nurses, and care managers directly with pharmacists. This will help clarify which medications a patient should take and when.

There is a new Epilepsy Monitoring Unit at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital (the region's first) that surveys brain activity and sleep patterns, and can capture data for up to five days, transforming the way they diagnose and prescribe treatment for brain disorders.

Also new in the Roanoke Valley is a new method of communicating a patient's medical information. Putting records in reach is a new form of advanced technology, called MyChart. This system advances the way your electronic records are handled. This new revolutionized way changes the way patients and physicians interact and exchange information. With the development and launch of a MyChart mobile app for smartphones your vital health resource is right at your fingertips.

There are no easy cancers. But now, women in the area have new specialists to help them fight back. There

is now more expanded expertise in urogynecology and gynecologic oncology. Physicians are helping pioneer new treatments in women's health and opening up possibilities for better outcomes.

There is something new in the Roanoke Valley. With a tradition of transforming healthcare, Carilion Clinic is changing the way it's taught. In the last year, the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine introduced its new Anatomage Table. This device, which is like a person-sized iPad for human anatomy, changes the way medical students view case scenarios and study the human body, with various angles and cross-sections all available at the swipe of a finger...and without picking up a scalpel. [1]

Roanoke County – Wellness Center and Employee Benefits

In Roanoke County, the Elected Board of Supervisors make the decisions regarding the choice of health care providers. The Board also decided to choose a Wellness Center program to assist our employees in bringing healthcare benefits to the workplace. Realizing that an important part of having a good life is having good health, Roanoke County is providing healthcare at work.

This benefit is designed to increase access to high quality care, help employees to better understand their own health, and to provide the tools to address any health concerns.

In Roanoke County there is a central location for the benefit center with hours designed to assist employee's working schedule. There are several benefits for using the Center:

**Time:** Little or no waiting- most appointments are complete in about 20 minutes

**Cost:** No cost for services provided at the health center

**Convenience:** Fast access to care for diagnosis and treatment of illness or injury

**Engagement:** Being actively involved in their health allows the employee to become eligible for a reduced health insurance premium

The Center is staffed by a full-time clinical staff of seven, including a physician, two physician's assistants, a registered nurse, two medical assistants, and a receptionist.

All employees, their spouses and retirees who are covered by the County's health plan are eligible for services provided at the center. Another incentive is the employee does not lose any salary while attending the center: no time lost from work, no loss of wages.

Earlier in 2014 Roanoke County employees were sent a Health History & Risk Assessment (HHRA) questionnaire on the Wellness Center's eHealth Portal. Employees then schedule time with the Nurse for a one-time Comprehensive Health Review (CHR). Once the CHR is completed, an incentive in the form of a reduced health insurance premium will begin.

During the 12-month period after completing the CHR, the employee will need to remain actively engaged with the Wellness Center to continue receiving the incentive. Some examples of active engagements include

health coaching and goal setting visits, and attending education classes on various health topics.

Prevention is an important part of the County's wellness program. This begins with a Health Assessment that includes a biometric test to assess blood pressure, height, weight, glucose and cholesterol levels. When these screenings are done, along with the HHRA and CHR already mentioned, the employee will then have a complete picture of their health including health risks that may lead to a chronic condition such as diabetes or heart disease. [2]

Roanoke County has taken the lead in establishing proactive programs to assist the employees and residents of the county in healthcare. We are also looking into the immediate future for benefit changes, realizing that we continue to have an aging population in the valley. We have numerous assisted living facilities and nursing homes all around the Roanoke region. These range from complete independent living locations to the most critical care in totally dependent nursing homes. Our region is highly regarded as one of the top healthcare areas in Virginia as evidenced by the Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital's rating as one of the top 10 hospitals in Virginia out of 128 surveyed by U.S. News & World Report. [3]

## Conclusions

In the Roanoke Valley area there is a commitment to continue providing first class healthcare for our citizens. The new Virginia Tech-Carilion Medical School just completed their first graduation class of doctors. Our assisted living centers continue to be updated as new ones are being constructed in areas of Roanoke County to serve a growing need. Our hospitals continue to receive awards for excellence such as Top 100 Most Integrated Healthcare Network in the United States by SDI Health as published in Modern Healthcare (Carilion Clinic), Beacon Award for Excellence in coronary critical care by the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital), and The Consumer Choice No. 1 by National Research Corporation (ninth consecutive year, Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital and Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital).

Making good on a promise to provide care that is both pioneering and accessible, the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute is using a \$4.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to help children with cerebral palsy. Through research and physical therapy, some 135 patients from around the world are expected to benefit, receiving treatment that last up to a month, and with hope, experiencing results that last a lifetime. The future is bright for Roanoke County and surrounding localities as we continue making cutting edge advancements in healthcare. [4]

## References

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