

Fast Five with Michael Albaum, MD



Chairman, MaineHealth ACO Board of Directors Senior Vice President & Chief Medical Officer, Southern Maine Health Care

Welcome to our new monthly feature—Fast Five—where we spotlight an individual connected with the MaineHealth ACO. This month we had a chance to catch up with Chairman of the Board, Dr. Mike Albaum, for five quick questions about some of the work happening in accountable care.

How do you see the work the MaineHealth ACO is doing impacting the patient experience? One thing the ACO is working towards is figuring out how to take care of a whole population of patients, not just those who are presenting to an office or clinic for acute care. We're also thinking through how we provide access for patients in our service area.

What may be different for patients under Accountable Care, is the number and types of people that are delivering their care. There's more emphasis on coaching, education and the use of care managers and care coordinators. This is something you just don't see in the traditional way medical care is delivered, and I think our patients will find this approach valuable in ensuring they meet their personal health goals.

What do you think is most critical for providers to focus on right now? A challenge for physicians is to not let the technical issues of dealing with EMRs and ICD-10 coding interfere with their real passion, which is providing good care for their patients. These technical changes are necessary for the way that we monitor the quality of care and the way that we're reimbursed, but we don't want that to get in the way of the doctor-patient interaction.

As a physician, I try to not let the data capture become the focus of the encounter with my patients. Patients want to be heard—they want to know you're listening to them. We have to become more expert at not letting the technology become a barrier for staying present with our patients.

What is your top work priority this month? At the local level, we're very involved in trying to improve standardization across our practices. We've had a lot of great work done at some of our individual practices and we're focusing on getting best practices spread across our system.

At the ACO level, we're kicking off the strategic planning process. We've had a consolidation of the number of entities down to the MaineHealth ACO, so we have strategic plans for each of those organizations. We think it's worth taking time to bring all of the different themes from each organization together into a strategic plan for the ACO, so we have a clear sense of where we are now and where we need to go in the future.

What do you do to stay healthy and active? I have three teenaged boys — a lot of staying active is chasing after them. My wife is also a physician, so when we're not at work, we're spending time with family hiking in the woods, biking or doing anything physically active.

What's on your playlist right now? There's a heavy rotation of David Bowie on my playlist right now. Also, my kids like classic rock. I'm not sure if it's inherited or what, but they're interested in old 60s, 70s and 80s album rock. Thanks to SiriusXM, we spend a fair amount of time listening to, and talking about rock—like trying to figure out time signatures for Led Zeppelin songs. All three of my kids play jazz and are becoming more knowledgeable about Bebop, so we're also listening to a lot of Charlie Parker and Miles Davis.

Dr. Albaum has spent more than 20 years in health care. He has 18 years of experience in clinical practice and has also served as Medical Director of PrimeCare PA. Dr. Albaum joined SMHC's medical staff in 1995 and moved into a management role in 2008. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Molecular Biochemistry and Biophysics at Yale University and his M.D. at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, where he also completed his residency in Internal Medicine. Dr. Albaum is board certified in Internal Medicine. Dr. Albaum resides in Kennebunk with his wife, Tammi Bittler, MD (Ob/Gyn), and their three sons.