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Harry G. Harris

HealthCare California | Fresno, California

Title: President

What we do: Clinical home health care under the direction of a physician's medical order

Education:

A.B. (honors), University of California at Berkeley
M.A., University of California at Berkeley
M.P.A., Harvard University
Ph.D., Harvard University

Age: Ageless

Family: Family of 70 employees

What led you to establish HealthCare California?

After a second retirement from professional life in 1997, I was engaged in global management consulting. Most of my experiences focused on entrepreneurs and their abilities, regardless of age, to venture into new opportunities. In 2004, my mother was hospitalized for a heart condition. After release, her physician wrote a medical prescription for home health care. During her period of recovery, I became more interested in this segment of the health care industry. I studied the aging demographics of our maturing population and the Medicare program for professional home health care. Since my mother had been a Medicare member for years, I was familiar with the Medicare system.

Around how many patients does the company serve each year?

2,000

Describe some of the highlights on your recent trip to explore China's health care system?

During my 22 years of travel to China, I have seen a country and society rapidly develop. Villages and towns have grown to become urban metropolises. As China became a global business player, there was need for management and financial

expertise.

My April 2010 visit to China was another in a continuing series of invitations from Chinese entrepreneurs and business enterprises to focus on business development and entrepreneurial networking. On this occasion, I was invited to address a conference of invited Chinese entrepreneurs seeking expertise to enter into the growing Chinese health care market.

I have always found all Chinese participants in my conferences, seminars, speeches and other meetings to be eager to learn and very involved in asking questions. There has been a thirst for business knowledge beyond formal business education in colleges and universities which are normally more conceptual rather than experience based.

While the Chinese government generally provides universal medical care for its citizens, there is a growing desire by more affluent citizens to seek private health care providers for services and medical equipment. The conference theme was Health Management for Entrepreneurs.

What are some challenges to the home health industry right now?

Medicare payments. In addition, these reductions

will place added stress on the system as the Baby Boomers are entering the Medicare rolls.

Adopting new technologies and developing new techniques and methods in the delivery of health care services. While it is costly to implement, productivity gains should make the new systems pay for themselves through improved care and less errors.

We need to be aware of fraud in the health care business, which currently loses billions of dollars yearly. Improved fraud detection and enforcement need to be implemented to reduce this drain on the Medicare system.

There are continuing barriers for new businesses to enter the industry. This includes the restriction on selling and transferring ownership in home health agencies and lack of timely new certification surveys by the state and federal governments. This is especially serious in outlying and traditionally underserved regions such as rural areas in our central valley.

How will the health care package in Congress affect companies like yours?

I have been an ardent supporter of enhancing health care for all Americans. The recent health care reform

legislation will be a landmark in our nation's history along side of Social Security and Medicare. While the legislation extends coverage to 32 million more people, there needs to be more emphasis on containing the spiraling costs of health care. America's health care system will be refined in the coming years as Social Security and Medicare have been in meeting the needs of our citizens.

The new legislation focuses on paying health care providers on the basis of patient improvement and not on the visit. The objective is to have a healthy population and keep people out of the long hospital stays, which are expensive. I welcome this change, which will recognize health care providers providing better services. The legislation also requires electronic health records [EHR], which will provide major cost savings and improve patient care. HealthCare California was the first home health agency in California to use a Web-based program for EHRs. We have continued to be in the forefront of change including the new federal legislation. Our job is to provide the best home health care for our patients while containing costs through improved management and clinical procedures. It's not easy; however, we are committed to making the system work.

What are your roots in the San Joaquin Valley?

I was born in Corcoran, California. At age two, my family moved to Hanford. I completed my education at the local schools and graduated from Hanford High School. Then I went to the University of California at Berkeley. I returned to Fresno in 1980 after a career in the military and government. I became a professor of management at the School of Business at California State University, Fresno and then a visiting professor at the University of California, Davis.

What was your first job and what did you learn from it?

My first job was at age 12 as a paper carrier for the

Los Angeles Times and San Francisco Chronicle. I remember I first started the job in November, one of the coldest and rainiest months of the year. I had to be at work at 4 a.m. to wrap each paper and then biked nearly four miles daily on my route! Fortunately, a few months later, I got another paper route for the local Hanford Sentinel newspaper, which was an afternoon edition. My first boss was a dynamic older lady who had lost her husband and struggled to keep the newspaper delivery business going. I learned to work hard and be timely, efficient and honest in all dealings. These lessons have carried me through my professional life including my appointments at The Pentagon and The White House and now with HealthCare California.

Who has been your mentor and what did you learn from him/her?

My early mentor was John T. McNaughton, a Harvard Law School professor, and my boss while I served as his executive assistant at The Pentagon. I was fortunate in having him guide me as I entered the world of global political and military affairs at a very young age among the Washington power elite. He demanded excellence and precision in all endeavors. This was natural since Professor McNaughton had written the seminal book on evidence used at the Harvard Law School. He believed in work and doing the best job possible within the shortest time frame. Time management was essential with constant and pressing deadlines. It was always a challenge in such an energetic environment. More important was his dedication to national service, which he embraced with great integrity and honesty. He encouraged and permitted me to continue my graduate education at Harvard. Without question, John T. McNaughton was a remarkable man who I truly remember and retain the highest respect for more than 40 years after his untimely death in an airplane accident shortly before he was to become our nation's Secretary of Navy.