

Health-care reform uncertainty a challenge

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Brant says healthy hospital will help maneuver changes.

“The key to change...is to let go of fear.”—Rosanne Cash.

Wrapping one’s mind around health-care reform is a tall order.

Especially when most Americans have no idea what the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will mean.

Mick Brant describes the unknowns of what will happen at the federal level as the biggest challenge facing Gothenburg Memorial Hospital.

“It’s hard, with our way of thinking, about changing a volume-based business,” said the CEO of GMH. “It costs more to take care of a sick person.”

Medical facilities and hospitals, like GMH, receive Medicare dollars based on the volume of in-patient stays and procedures performed under their roofs.

Under the new federal plan, Brant said medical facilities will receive federal dollars based on the quality of care they provide that promotes wellness, not illness.

A simplistic example involves a patient whose cholesterol level is tested at GMH and then managed by doctors and the patient.

If the level shows a decline, the hospital and doctor receive more federal dollars.

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“The federal government will hold us accountable for people being well,” he explained, “If they’re not well, we’ll be penalized.”

Brant said the uncertainty in the health-care equation is how the reform is going to evolve.

A huge benefit, as GMH paddles into uncharted waters, is the fact that the hospital is in good shape, he said.

He noted that GMH is one of 19 critical access hospitals in the nation with better-than-average financial health.

“That gives us the ability to provide more services for patients which just makes sense,” Brant said.

The hospital provides many services already, including the expertise of a full-time world-class surgeon which is unusual for a town the size of Gothenburg, he said.

Brant said a progressive, supportive hospital board with an entrepreneurial spirit invests money in what the community needs.

At this point, he said he doesn’t see any trouble spots at GMH.

“It’s healthy and progressive and meeting the needs of the community,” Brant said.

Still, he said he wants to insure the hospital is positioned to continue taking great care of patients.

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