

Executive Profile for Loudoun Business Journal:

Bruce T. Roberts

RxAlly CEO

Most of us in the U.S. know that our nation's health care system is, to put it mildly, quite challenged. The rising costs of health care continue to go up, year after year. Costs aside, the inefficiencies riddling our health care system alone are, according to a recently published, 450-page report entitled *Best Care at Lower Cost: The Path to Continuously Learning Health Care in America* by the nonpartisan Institute of Medicine (IOM), as endless as the eye can see.

Those who keep a watchful eye on the topic of health care in the news surely can't help but feel increasingly concerned with all the startling facts and figures plaguing the health care system in our country.

Some of the latest and dismal stats from the IOM report include:

- Every year, the United States spends eight times as much money on unnecessary health-care costs as the Pentagon spent for each year of its operations in Iraq.
- Our country loses some \$750 billion annually to medical fraud, inefficiencies, and other siphons in the health-care system.
- About 75,000 deaths a year might be prevented if the type of medicine practiced in the best states was the standard nationwide.

Sadly, IOM's list of depressing statistics like those listed above goes on and on. In the end, one bleak statistic after another can only lead to the following, clear conclusion: the U.S. health care system is broken!

Millions of Americans, 46.3 million of which – according to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) – were uninsured in 2011, are greatly impacted by this country's broken health policies. For years, fixes promised by managed care seem to have not materialized. And politicians have heavily debated the subject of health care reform intensely and countless of times but to date have failed to reach a unified consensus on how to resolve the problems. All the while, premium costs keep rising as do waste and the numbers of uninsured.

With such an enormous and unending conundrum, how will health care in our country ever be reformed? Who can Americans look to for leadership in what appears to be a clouded quagmire of bureaucracy and never-ending, dissenting opinions?

Enter Leesburg-based RxAlly. Founded by longtime Loudouner and Bruce T. Roberts, RxAlly is the largest national network of pharmacies – 22,000 strong and

growing – seeking to improve health and lower costs.

So what exactly, you may be asking, can a network of 22,000 some pharmacists actually do to help fix our country's broken health care system? According to Roberts, plenty. "U.S. pharmacists are too often underutilized and not given the opportunity to fully leverage their training and potential," shares Roberts who cites that pharmacists in the U.S. undergo eight years of education. "For too long, pharmacists have been looked upon as mere purveyors of a commodity: prescription medicines. The member pharmacists of our RxAlly network are innovative and care deeply about providing quality patient care while lowering costs. They very much want to be seen as part of the health care reform solution."

From the inside looking in where Roberts sits overseeing a team of 40+ employees devoted to health care transformation, this seems to make incredible sense. However, to the non-RxAlly staff or network member, it's not immediately clear how pharmacists can be part of the health reform equation. Roberts explains, "We have enormous volumes of evidence proving that when patients use their medications correctly, costs are lowered. Conversely, when patients use their medications incorrectly, costs rise." And who are the gatekeepers to the prescription meds? Answer: pharmacists. "The misuse of medications has led to more hospitalizations and nursing home admissions, driving up the cost of health care for everyone in the U.S.," states Roberts.

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Roberts is right. The CDC's findings indicate prescription drug overdoses have become a U.S. epidemic and the country's fastest growing drug problem exceeding cocaine and heroin overdoses combined. In 2007, the CDC reports

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Roberts is pharmacist, entrepreneur and the Executive Vice President and CEO of the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) from 2001 until his retirement in 2010.

A staunch supporter of the vital role that pharmacists can and must play in our increasingly complex healthcare delivery system, Roberts is a tireless advocate for the profession, the business, and the future of community pharmacy in the United States and around the world.

The founder and owner of three pharmacies and a home health care company in Loudoun County, Virginia, outside Washington, D.C., Roberts always has been on the cutting edge—in offering innovative pharmacy services, promoting the use of technology in the pharmacy, and making the pharmacist an integral part of the health care team and the community. To shape the success of RxAlly and its more than 22,000 member pharmacies, Roberts brings together his singular skills and experience to guide patients, pharmacists, and payers into an exciting new generation of pharmacy care.

approximately 27,000 unintentional drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States; that's one death every 19 minutes.

And what about the cost associated with the misuse of prescription drugs? "It's a \$290 billion dollar issue," reveals Roberts. "There's no better time than the present to tackle this monstrous issue. And there's no better impetus for change than pain. Our health care system is very full of pain these days. And there's pain for the payers, too. Payers are spending twice as much in our country for health care in comparison to other developed countries. Last but hardly least, physicians have great pains as well. They are sandwiched in between the payers and a defective, highly dysfunctional health care system."

Roberts, like those belonging to his RxAlly network – a network which unites thousands of independent pharmacies, numerous regional chains and Walgreens, the nation's largest pharmacy chain – is of the mindset that the role of today's pharmacist must be one that leverages their extensive clinical training and better equips them to interact with and improve patient health. "Innovative technology is at the heart of our efforts in solving the nation's health care problems," explains Roberts. The centerpiece of these efforts is RxAlly's proprietary technology – currently under development – which aims to connect RxAlly network members to create seamless interoperability.

"The idea behind our technology is simple," states Roberts. "By aggregating a patient's medical data, we can better understand what is going on with a patient's health. As an example, if a patient has been given a prescription that he or she is to fill in 30 days but doesn't come back to the pharmacy to fill the prescription until 60 days later, this is an indication that the patient is not using his or her medication properly. This in turn would alert the pharmacist to proactively communicate with the patient as well as the patient's physician to determine an appropriate course of action. As such, by identifying occurrences of a patient's incorrect use of prescription drugs, we can help to steer clear of potential accidents or worsening health conditions which of course, in the end, lead to increased costs."

In collaboration with RxAlly network members and other key partnerships, Roberts is determined to transform the way pharmacists are looked upon by those who seek to reform health care policies. "Pharmacists have historically been looked at in a silo rather than as an integral part of the health care system," says Roberts. Open since only February of this year, Roberts is confident RxAlly has already made significant progress in a relatively short period of time. "By combining our core strengths, expertise, resources and infrastructures with those of our RxAlly network members, we will successfully bring something completely different to the marketplace and the arena of health care reform."

To learn more about Roberts and RxAlly's many initiatives, please visit the company's web site at www.RxAlly.com.