



“Healthcare in the Age of Transformers”

La Junta, CO—September 17, 2013—Southeast Health Group

PHOTO: Southeast Health Group recently transformed its entry and lobby area to make it larger and more accessible. Pictured are Chuck Hansen, Rob Nicklos & Barry Shiohita who oversaw the project.



Transformer toys have been around for a few decades. You may even have one rolling around on the floor of your car from a Happy Meal, or you might have seen them at a garage sale. Transformers are made to look like an ordinary vehicle, but with a few twists and turns, the movable parts open out into an action figure. With names like “Cliff Jumper” and “Megatron,” these toys elicit an imaginary world where children overcome obstacles using the strength and smarts of the transformed characters.

The Healthcare Industry is making its own series of transformations, using its strengths and smarts to improve the quality and accessibility of health care services. At the local level, Southeast Health Group has transformed itself by combining its mental health, substance use disorder and primary care services to achieve the only full-time, fully-integrated healthcare organization in southeastern Colorado.

“Essentially, we’ve been in the process of getting all our healthcare services under one roof,” said JC Carrica, COO of Southeast Health Group. “We started out in 1957 with mental health services, and added substance use disorder treatment in 2006. This past February we expanded into Primary Care, which has allowed us to do a better job helping people with multiple chronic conditions, including mental health and substance use disorders. It took us a few years to change our mindset, but we are now fully-integrated with on-site staff available all day long, Monday through Friday. We also have emergency services available 24/7 to provide mental health and substance use disorder evaluations.”

Integrated care is when health care professionals consider all health conditions at the same time. If, for example, a person is taking two or more medications at the same time, including a medication for a mental health disorder, doctors at integrated care facilities can monitor the interaction of the drugs. Integrated treatment is more likely to be tailored to the individual, as it allows for health care professionals to understand more about the whole person.

“Our healthcare providers live in our communities and are invested in serving the needs of southeast Coloradoans. They have children in our schools, shop in our stores, and understand the unique needs and cultures of our communities. They know our patients and other community providers on a first-name basis,” said Carrica.

Integration of primary care and behavioral health care allows health professionals to coordinate diagnoses and treatments, which often results in fewer medical tests and eliminates repetition of even such simple procedures as blood draws. Integrated health care delivery will ensure that your medications will not interfere with one another or, more importantly, will not be prescribed in a way that could harm you. It also allows for all health care information to be accessible from one place, and results in fewer forms for patients to fill out, leaving less room for error and confusion. Integrating mental health, substance abuse, and primary care services is a transformation that produces the best outcomes and proves the most effective approach to caring for people with multiple healthcare needs.

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