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Summit Health's Business Development Chief Looks Toward the Future

Rob Scoskie, chief business development officer at the Berkeley, N.J.-based Summit Health, shares his perspectives on where the advanced multispecialty group is headed in the current and emerging marketplace

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What does expansion look like among multispecialty medical groups whose leaders have committed 100 percent to value-based care delivery and contracting? It looks like the thoughtful integration of additional providers based on their willingness to be part of the

ongoing effort. That's how things are playing out for the Berkeley Heights, New Jersey-based Summit Health, which continues to expand even as its leaders continuously advance on their value-based journey.

As [a June 7 press release announced](#), "In a major step to expand its care model centered on making high-quality primary, specialty and urgent care accessible to more patients in the New York metropolitan area, Summit Health today announced the integration of Gotham Gastroenterology. The addition of Gotham Gastroenterology, one of the largest GI specialty groups in New York City, is the first extension of Summit Health's highly effective patient care and physician group management model in the New York region. The integration brings a roster of 16 diverse gastrointestinal specialists and four office and ambulatory surgery center locations in Midtown Manhattan, Lower Manhattan, and Brooklyn. To begin the branding transition, the practice will initially adopt the Summit Health brand endorsement, becoming Gotham Gastroenterology, A Summit Health Company."

As [the organization's website notes](#), "Summit Health is a physician-led, patient-centric network committed to simplifying the complexities of health care and bringing a more connected kind of care. Formed by the 2019 merger between Summit Medical Group, one of the nation's premier independent physician-governed multispecialty medical groups, and CityMD, the leading urgent care provider in the New York metro area, Summit Health delivers a more intuitive, comprehensive, and responsive care experience for every stage of life and health condition through high-quality primary, specialty, and urgent care. Summit Health has more than 2,000 providers, 8,000 employees and over 200 locations in New Jersey and New York, as well as more than 130 providers and six locations in Central Oregon – previously known as Summit Medical Group Oregon."

The acquisition of Gotham Gastroenterology, which offers three patient care locations in Manhattan and one in Brooklyn, represents "a major step to expand its care model centered on making high-quality primary, specialty and urgent care accessible to more patients in the New York metropolitan area," the Summit Health executives noted. The press release quoted Dan Frogel, M.D., regional chief medical officer, as stating that "The ever-evolving health care landscape is requiring independent physician groups to make critical decisions that will shape their future and the delivery of patient care. And, as Summit Health expands our services to the greater New York region, attracting high caliber and highly specialized groups like Gotham Gastroenterology is vital to growing our clinical model and ensuring greater access to comprehensive, connected care for the patient."

And it quoted Rob Scoskie, Summit Health's chief business development officer, as stating that "We will continue to leverage our care model as we grow organically, through new site development and by integrating primary and specialty groups that are a strong cultural and clinical fit."

Founded in 2010, Gotham Gastroenterology offers comprehensive care in gastroenterology, hepatology, women's gastrointestinal health and nutrition services. Gotham Gastroenterology's board-certified physicians offer expert skills in performing endoscopic procedures and providing diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of digestive system diseases. The group's hospital affiliations are with NYU Medical Center and Lenox Hill Hospital. The group's physicians perform endoscopic procedures at Manhattan Endoscopy Center in Midtown Manhattan, Liberty Endoscopy Center in the Financial District and in their own ambulatory surgery facility in the Brooklyn Heights office.

Earlier this month, Rob Scoskie spoke with *Healthcare Innovation* Editor-in-Chief Mark Hagland regarding Summit Health's broad business strategy, and how it dovetails with the organization's leaders' determination to continue to succeed in value based care delivery and contracting. Below are excerpts from that interview.

How long have you been with Summit Health?

I joined Summit Health in September 2019. I spent fifteen years prior to that with Northwell Health, in business development and strategic ventures.

Where is Summit Health right now in terms of your business development?

I'll start with our strategy. Summit Health—I joined shortly after the marriage of Summit Medical Group and CityMD, the urgent-care platform in the New York City market. Summit Medical Group had been operating as a multispecialty group primarily in New Jersey, but also in Bend, Oregon. And the idea of the organizations coming together was to develop access points in primary care and urgent care services. CityMD had a lot of expertise in urgent care, and Summit Medical Group had had a hundred years' experience in multispecialty medical group practice and operations. And it seemed clear that we needed to develop a primary care presence across the New York City metro area, and that we could also introduce greater urgent-care presence in New Jersey.

So our line of sight in terms of how we're drawing the model is really three-fold: M&A is the first core strategy; the second is de novo development and pure recruitment of sound clinicians who fit well into the culture of Summit Health; and the third is the development of new bricks-and-mortar locations. And I'll add a fourth, which is a digital health platform. As of last week [late June], we've just launched an expanded app, which allows patients to

access services, schedule appointments, access telehealth appointments, review financial data, get results reported.

Risk-based contracts proved to be smart for medical groups during the pandemic. What are your thoughts on how that has played out in the past year-and-a-half?

We're an ambulatory-based set of services. And so our culture, and how the group interacts and manages patients through a connected-care model, allows for the management of that patient in a low-cost setting. It allows for the use of systems that have been matured in the group for many years. And because of that—it's strategic, but it's also engrained in the culture of the group. So it's how the group practices. And so it happens to be on the right side of the cost curve, but also on the right side of keeping patients well. We can perform equally successfully in terms of risk-based and value-based payment; and how we think of the market in terms of the connected-care model and through access points to ancillary follow-up points and subspecialty care delivery—how we go about that process is a tried-and-true method.

You've mastered the formula, in other words?

Yes. And if you look at the arc of activity relative to the pandemic, as a multispecialty enterprise, we think we played a very critical role in the New York metro area's response to the COVID crisis. The urgent care-related access points were a very important part of the process. We were able to balance and weather the storm very effectively because we had multiple horses in the stable, as it were. So we continue to have a multispecialty group that continues to care for patients, but we also have the absolute flexibility, and the strategy played itself out perfectly; in fact, it was battle-tested in the COVID environment.

When you look at the forward trajectory of risk-based contracting nationwide, what do you see?

Again, we view ourselves as a value-based-oriented medical group that's run and governed by clinicians. And because our model is tied to ensuring that patients are serviced in the lowest possible cost setting, it establishes us well in terms of any existing or future reimbursement environment. It speaks to our flexibility. We can be flexible and capable in both discounted fee-for-service markets, and in more advanced markets. So we feel strategically comfortable. The great thing about being in this metro area—NY, NJ, CT, PA—there are numerous sub-markets, but we think that the ambulatory focus of our operation, the connected-care model—and we're going to be spending more and more money on access development—that speaks to our being successful in each of those environments.

How many primary care locations and urgent care locations do you have now, and what do you expect those numbers to be in the next couple of years?

As of June, we have 283 locations. There are 156 urgent care locations, and the remainder are multispecialty locations, and incorporated in those locations are hubs and spokes, so to speak. So you'd find major locations that are 200,000-square-foot locations with surgery centers, radiation oncology services, imaging services, women's and children's health, etc.; those are hubs, and we'll be building more of those. And then there are smaller, freestanding sites, the 5,000-15,000-square-foot locations. And the way that we view primary care is that primary care is an absolute access point. There are components of primary care delivery inside urgent care facilities. One of the most sought-after needs of patients going to urgent care facilities is primary care services; so it's a core strategy.

Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your perspective on the future?

So our future growth, as I noted, is to continue to build and develop access points, but also to continue to edge out the geographic reach of all of our services. So in those markets where we might already have urgent-care access, we're building out multispecialty care services—at least three in Manhattan, a number on Long Island, and in upper Westchester Country—and also as we grow south in New Jersey. And again, we'll continue forward with this connected-care model of delivery—that's a key ingredient to delivering the services that Summit Health is accustomed to delivering. And the reality is that there has to be a good clinical and operational fit for any group to be included in our model. So bringing in a group like Gotham GI is an example of that.

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