



**Manu'a**  
**Healthcare**  
Foundation

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 5, 2014

## **MANU'A HEALTHCARE PROPOSES DECENTRALIZATION AND PRIVATIZATION OF HEALTHCARE IN AMERICAN SAMOA**

Strategy to improve the "Quality of Healthcare" with alternative healthcare provider choices

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa, May 5, 2014– Manu'a Healthcare Foundation (MHF) provided a discussion and strategy paper to members of the American Samoa Healthcare Transformation Task Force on Thursday May 1, 2014.

Doctor Malo Tuiolosega of Manu'a Healthcare Foundation facilitated a discussion with members of the Tasks Force on what is working today, what is not, propose changes to adjust to new realities including what is coming from Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), and legal and structural changes required to transform the existing healthcare system.

*"Manu'a Healthcare is presenting these proposals and recommendations today since it cares about the current healthcare situation in American Samoa", says Doctor Tuiolosega. "And to provide the advanced care our people expect and demand, the healthcare system as it is structured and stands today obviously must change. For the last 20 or more years the focus has been solely on basic and rudimentary medical services which is only responsible for roughly 15% overall health of a population."*

Manu'a Healthcare understands that roughly 85% of population well-being is based on non-clinical determinants, that a healthcare system in crisis will need multi-tactical solutions applied simultaneously, and proposes changes to the following areas to effectively transform the existing healthcare system in American Samoa:

- **Political influence:** Separation of healthcare from political influence.

- **Modify existing Medical Laws:** Change existing laws that currently make LBJ Medical Center (13.0102 et seq. A.S.C.A.), the only delivery mechanism for healthcare to American Samoa.
  - *Allow for private and religious institutions and entities to also provide same or similar healthcare services to our growing population.*
- **Decentralize and Privatize:** Decentralization and Privatization of the current healthcare delivery system.
  - *This includes outsourcing and sharing of services with LBJ.*
  - *MHF does not see this as fragmenting the system but, the sharing and distribution of responsibilities, and providing alternative choices for American Samoans.*
- **Municipal Healthcare Districts:** Development of three (3) Healthcare Districts (Manu'a, Eastern, and Western) focused on development, management, improvement and oversight of their own Healthcare System.
  - *MHF believes a viable delivery system is already in place through the Local Government System under the Office of Samoan Affairs.*
  - *MHF suggests the concept of municipality to the three (3) districts with their own zip code address would assist in separation and allocation of funds and grants for their development.*
  - *MHF also believes that as long as healthcare is centralized to one governing entity it will forever be a central responsibility to any governing administration.*
- **Licensing Board:** MHF proposes the separation of the licensing board for healthcare professionals to an NGO with a permanent Executive Director, with overseer by Governing administrations:
  - Health Professions Licensing Board:**
    1. Medical Board (c/w Federation of State Medical Boards)
    2. Nursing Board (c/w National Council of State Boards of Nursing)
    3. Pharmacy Board (c/w Model State Act, State Boards of Pharmacy)
  - Health Professional Societies:**
    1. Develop continuing education programs
    2. Offer discounted benefits of membership (liability insurance, etc.)
    3. Offer legal advice to members
- **Independent Physician Groups:** Establishment of independent physician groups, governed by physicians which will allow:
  1. Physicians to make appropriate patient care decisions and render that care based on their professional judgment and what's considered standard of care for that specialty
  2. Funds for current physicians and those allocated for future physicians to be redirected to development of group
  3. Physicians to be part of a group that in addition to a base salary, will be incentivized by a productivity formula consistent with MGMA standards
  4. Independent physician group to directly contract with CMS, Private Plans for services
  5. Independent Physician Group to contract for services outside of the Territory
  6. Leverage to create its own plan or through a Third Party Administrator (TPA)

- **Reduce Off-Island Medical Referrals:** Focus on reducing the amount of off-island medical referrals for treatment of diseases; developing those services on island to reduce cost, and have a ready and available patient care system next to our people.
  - *Advancing development is to shift away from being dependent to being independent and self-sufficient.*
- **State Medicaid Agency:** Assist the State Medicaid Agency in updating the American Samoa Medicaid State Plan to facilitate the privatization of the healthcare system in American Samoa.
- **Territory Electronic Medical Records:** Build or leverage a robust Territorial-wide Electronic Medical Records (eMR) System to register and manage all Patient records and care throughout the American Samoa healthcare system, including improved billing and monitoring of federally funded healthcare reimbursements and funding.
  - *With HIPAA guidance, such system needs to be network accessible to ensure continuity of patient care to healthcare professionals in the mainland, which is suitable under the Affordable Care Act.*
  - *A central Territorial Patient Record System would ensure continuity of patient medical information and care.*
- **Medical Tourism:** Leverage Medical Tourism to help reduce cost for delivering healthcare to American Samoans
- **Sustainable local Industry in support of healthcare:** Leverage the development of sustainable local industries that will invest in supportive financing of healthcare, research and development.
  - *Requires collaboration and support from the various departments of the American Samoa Government.*
- **Medical Training and Education:** Initiate medical training and education on location with the focus to develop the local and regional pool of medical professionals.
  - *Requires the collaboration and support from learning institutes in American Samoa and the region.*
- **Assisted Living Facilities:** Leverage and promote the development of recovery, rehabilitation, and assisted living facilities within the private sector, in alignment with Medical Tourism.

Manu’a Healthcare believes these key targeted points would directionally make a change in the thinking and approach of leaders responsible for improving and delivering Quality of Care to American Samoans.

*“Some of these concepts are not new or foreign to anyone.” says Doctor Peter Katsiyiannis, Chief of Manu’a Healthcare Cardiovascular Center of Excellence.*

*“Acknowledgement that a system in place is not working is a good first step. However as leaders, just the acknowledgement is not enough if there’s no intention to take further steps and more steps. It is like diagnosing a disease and not treating it.”*

The Task Force consisting of the Director of American Samoa Medicaid State Agency Sandra King Young (Co-chair); Director of American Samoa Department of Health (Co-chair); Secretary of the Office of Samoan Affairs; Joseph Davis-Flemings, CEO of LBJ TMC; Insurance Commissioner (Governor’s Office); Director of American Samoa Department of Commerce; Director of American Samoa Department of Human Resources; Director of American Samoa Department of Agriculture; Doctor Fred Urhle of Veterans Administration Clinic; Sarah Tuitele of the Social Security/Medicare; Lewis Wolman, President

of the American Samoa Chamber of Commerce; Doctor Malo Tuiolosega and Peter Katsiyiannis from Manu'a Healthcare Foundation/VIDA Medical Clinic; David Robinson, Chairman of Hope House; Iulogogo Joseph Pereira, Executive Assistant to the Governor and; Doctor Jean Anderson Asuega, Principal Psychologist for Helping Hands.

Manu'a Healthcare Foundation is an American Samoa-based non-profit entity, focused on delivering advanced healthcare, medical research, medical tourism and educational programs to advance healthcare in American Samoa. Manu'a Healthcare Foundation has offices in American Samoa and in Los Angeles, California with physicians at each location to serve the Samoan and Pacific island communities.

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