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3

Affordable Care Act

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The Affordable Care Act was enacted in 2010 and introduced reforms focused on increasing healthcare access, lowering costs and improving care quality. The law expanded health insurance coverage through expanding Medicaid, including the creation of health insurance marketplaces and implementing regulations to improve patient safety and care. For this reason, one major provision is the Medicaid Expansion which extended coverage to a significant number of low-income individuals hence increasing their access to preventive and primary care. Another provision is the requirement for insurers to cover essential health benefits (EHBs) such as preventive screenings, maternity care, prescription drugs, and mental health services (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2022). Additionally, the ACA also supported developing the Patient-Centered Medical Homes (PCMH) and Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) to foster patient-centered, value-based, and coordinated care.

These provisions shifted care from reactive to proactive and preventive models. This made patients more likely to undergo vaccinations, routine checks, and screenings, allowing for early detection and management of conditions (Ercia, 2021). Additionally, the promotion of PCMHs and ACOs has encouraged integrated care delivery thereby improving communication among providers while reducing unnecessary emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

I have had professional experience within my community clinic where I observed the impact of the ACA firsthand. Patients who were previously uninsured gained access to chronic disease management and regular check-ups due to marketplace coverage and expanded Medicaid. Consequently, many patients expressed relief for being able to afford preventative services and medications. Ultimately, this has led to improved patient engagement, reduced reliance on acute care services, and better health outcomes.

4

References

- Ercia, A. (2021). The impact of the Affordable Care Act on patient coverage and access to care: perspectives from FQHC administrators in Arizona, California and Texas. *BMC Health Services Research*, 21(1), 920. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-021-06961-9>
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2022). *Affordable Care Act (ACA) implementation*. <https://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/about-the-aca/index.html>