

Cook County Health CEO Calls for Collaboration

Israel Rocha, Jr., discusses partnerships across Chicago during virtual event

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, June 24, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- It is understood across the healthcare industry that hospitals and health systems must partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) in order to advance health equity and drive transformation. CareAdvisors Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Chris Gay recently sat with Cook County Health CEO Israel Rocha, Jr., to learn more about his vision for health equity at a Chicago Health Executives Forum (CHEF) C-suite event.

"As healthcare providers, we have to partner with CBOs because our patients probably spend less than, I would say, 3% of their overall time with a healthcare provider in a clinic or hospital setting," Rocha explained at the CareAdvisors-sponsored event. "The majority of their lives are going to be spent in the communities where they live and work. If we don't have partners in that space, then we fail to help patients mitigate or get the services that they need. And so, our goal is to bridge those two by working with community providers to expand the community health service line."

Gay moderated the event, which drew more than 20 Chicago healthcare leaders interested in the perspective Rocha shared as he spoke of his role as former CEO of NYC Health & Hospitals Elmhurst and Queens Hospitals in New York, shared his views on the role of public health, and responded to questions regarding his vision of collaboration with community partners to address the health disparities we see across Chicago. His forward-looking statements align with a challenge Allison Arwady, MD, MPH, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health, put to Chicago healthcare leaders at this year's CHEF Annual Meeting.



“We haven’t set up a system that makes sure people have access to the things that allow them to have healthy lives,” Dr. Arwady stated at the February 2021 event. “COVID has shined a light on our failings as a health department, as a health system, as a city, and as a country. I think it is as much about the fact that we’ve created a system that sets up these kinds of inequities and we’ve not been serious about addressing the work underlying them.”

To that end, Rocha spoke about the innovative collaborations that will serve to transform healthcare in Cook County.

“We are working to be more available and that is why we are creating more sites across the county to be available and accessible to patients,” he said. “It starts with access. Our system has some challenges right now...how we balance needs, how we balance access points, and how we make it easier for people to get assistance is the journey we all have to do together...We are interested in working with and talking to everyone at the table on how we can re-innovate healthcare.”

Beyond an integrated medical management program, Rocha expressed his plan to partner with community organizations to address social determinants of health.

“There are a lot of opportunities where we can work together in either value-added services, like food, nutrition and housing services, or whether it would be wrap-around services for what I call supportive health management,” he added. “How we create those programs together is what we are looking to do in all the different service lines.”

After providing a series of thought-provoking questions, Gay thanked Rocha for sharing his expertise, passion and compelling vision for Chicago. “Our industry leaders appreciated the opportunity to hear from Cook County Health, which played such a significant role in COVID-19 vaccination,” Gay reflected. “Many of the necessary partnerships that were forged to provide resources to the most vulnerable communities during the pandemic continue to evolve for the better health of the entire city.”

About CareAdvisors

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