

Mayo Clinic's success secret: teamwork

After a diagnosis, patients at the Mayo Clinic meet with a team of specialists who help them understand what's happening so they can decide about treatment together, says president and CEO Denis Cortese.

This kind of teamwork is the stock-in-trade of Cortese, who won last year's top leadership award from the National Center for Healthcare Leadership.

Asked why health care so often lacks the collaboration that makes Mayo famous, Cortese traces the problem to medical schools, where he says students aren't trained to work in teams. Each student takes exams alone, and even in clinical practice, most rewards relate to things you do as an individual, such as specialized procedures and reading X-rays.

What's more, he says, "doctors are going into sub-, sub-, sub-specialties where it is easier to build all-in knowledge in that area where they operate alone. But it is difficult to take care of patients with five different conditions. That requires teams."

Can you mimic the Mayo teams on behalf of your customers? A conference call up front to plan out services? A whole team descending on your customer's problem like pit stop mechanics rushing up to refresh a racecar?

— Adapted from "Dr. Denis Cortese Talks About Mayo Clinic's Culture of Collaboration as the Foundation for Patient-Centered Healthcare," *Modern Healthcare*.