

# Pilot program aims to help area doctors retool practices

BY MIKE SHERRY | STAFF WRITER

A new health initiative aims to do locally what Congress is trying to do nationally.

A two-year pilot program through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City and Leawood-based American Academy of Family Physicians' TransformMED subsidiary aims to retool the operations of 13 participating primary-care practices. A \$1 million investment from Blue Cross will finance the effort, which was announced Nov. 12.

Key to the "patient-centered medical home" pilot – similar to 15 others TransformMED has throughout the country – are revised insurance reimbursements that pay for outcomes instead of procedures.

TransformMED provides consulting services so participating practices can focus on prevention, and Blue Cross will provide patient-management software.

"We could do things like calling people two days after their quit date for smoking and establish – Did you quit? What problems are you having?" said Dr. Larry Rues. He practices at Goppert-Trinity Family Care in Kansas City, a participant in the pilot.

"Those are very powerful things," Rues said. "But right now, frankly, we are so busy doing what we are doing that we don't have time to do that, and to be honest with you, there's not a lot of incentive to do that."

## PRIMARY RE-EDUCATION

A health insurance pilot project involving 13 Kansas City-area primary-care practices aims to:

- Coordinate patients' care through their primary-care physician.
- Measure outcomes with electronic medical records.
- Manage illnesses before they become severe.

At Kansas City Internal Medicine, another pilot participant, the altered approach could mean sending nurses to patients' homes to make sure they're managing their conditions, practice President Dr. Keith Jantz said.

David Gentile, CEO-elect of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City, said he hopes the pilot can provide direction on implementing a reimbursement scheme that encourages more family practices in the area to adopt a medical-home approach.

TransformMED has seen diminished hospitalizations and emergency room visits within six months of the start of other pilots, CEO Dr. Terry McGeeney said.

Outcomes in those pilots have included greater satisfaction among staff and patients and reduced costs for insurers because conditions are caught early.

"Everything all kind of fits and works together," McGeeney said.

