



## Saint Mary's Health Care to launch new medical group

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Mark Sanchez | Business Review West Mich...

**Saint Mary's Health Care's** new medical group will begin operations July 1, aiming to improve care coordination and drive efficiencies.

The Advantage Health/Saint Mary's Medical Group, a temporary name, consists of 120 primary-care doctors now with **Advantage Health Physician Network** and 45 specialty physicians employed by Saint Mary's Health Care.

In forming the new group, the physicians are coming together in a model that makes it easier to coordinate care, especially as patients are referred to specialists and move through the health care system, Advantage Health President David Blair said.

"We're going to act more like one," said Blair, a family physician.

The formation of the new Saint Mary's-owned medical group follows a trend across the nation that aims to better align doctors and hospitals, an endeavor not easily undertaken for such separate businesses with differing financial interests.

"We're really focused on getting on the same page so there will be a level of care coordination that our patients haven't seen before," Blair said. "We'll be more familiar with each other being part of the same organization."

About two-thirds of the doctors on the Saint Mary's Health Care medical staff have joined the new medical group, which is actively recruiting, Blair said.



David Blair

For independent physicians in the Grand Rapids area — particularly specialists and subspecialists — who want tighter alignment with Saint Mary's Health Care but don't wish to become employees, the new medical group offers what's known as Care Path Partners, which allows them to become part of a common agenda focused on clinical quality, financial efficiency and service excellence, Blair said.

"Our goal is to act as a single organization, but not require people to be employees in the organization," he said.

Care Path Partners provides independent physicians who practice at Saint Mary's Health Care a vehicle to become involved in the new medical group while maintaining their autonomy, Blair said. The group already is talking with a number of independent physicians about joining, either as employees or as part of Care Path Partners.

"The more, the merrier is how we look at it," said Bruce Shabahang, a thoracic surgeon at Saint Mary's Health Care. "We'd love to grow, and we'd love to have a higher market share."

Advantage Health Physician Network will dissolve as a separate corporation owned by Saint Mary's. Participating doctors have worked for the group as independent contractors.

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