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No. 1 concern:

Our improved understanding of the impact of childhood health (or lack of

health) on lifelong accomplishments, educational performance, quality of life and individual productivity places great pressure on pediatrics to insure the healthiest possible children transitioning to adult care. However, ongoing concerns of childhood hunger, poverty, violence and uneven education place barriers to achievement of child health care goals. These dynamics, combined with changes in medical care reimbursement which unevenly target child health for cost reduction, endanger children's health which results in poor adult health to the next generation of our citizens.

Biggest improvement in regional health care:

Continued and improving access to the latest medical care advances, especially for life-threatening or complex diseases (cancer, neurologic disease, heart disease, children's mental health illnesses and inherited disease). The rapid advancement in the availability of specific genetic diagnostic testing for chronic illnesses early in life offers unlimited potential to change the way childhood illness is diagnosed and treated.

Factors impacting the cost:

Our current health care funding systems provide few enticements for preventing illnesses and diseases and instead reward high health care utilization (hospitalizations, diagnostic tests and procedures, medication administration). New technology costs more and new, targeted medications for the most serious of illnesses are extremely expensive. We are now able to treat and control previously life-threatening childhood illnesses and diseases, but at a high financial cost to our health care system. Our current challenge is how to provide the best of care to each individual child while respecting costs in the health care system. Improved efficiencies and cooperation between health care systems (working to minimize high cost duplication of services) and expanded use of specific diagnostic tests (mostly specific genetic tests) to definitively diagnose the correct illness to treat as early as possible in a disease are two ways to begin to reach our goals of excellent care at an excellent price. To accomplish these goals will require ongoing adaptation to our health systems, reimbursement systems and medical educational programs.