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UW Health, UnityPoint Health, UnityPoint Health – Meriter Finalize Deeper Partnership
*Physicians Plus, Unity Health Plans Insurance Corporation and Gundersen Health Plan, Inc. affiliate
under Quartz brand*

MADISON and SAUK CITY, Wis. – (July 10, 2017) – After a little more than a year of planning and negotiation, UW Health and UnityPoint Health – Meriter are establishing a new business relationship that closely links the state’s largest academic medical center with a highly respected community hospital. The resulting relationship, unique among healthcare systems, will strengthen Meriter’s community mission while allowing UW Health to expand its leadership in high-level care.

In addition, Physicians Plus Insurance Corporation is affiliating with the Quartz brand, along with Unity Health Insurance (Unity) and Gundersen Health Plan, in order to better serve a broader range of members.

As of July 1, the transactions became effective and the organizations are officially integrating operations and combining organizational strengths to better serve the community.

In the simplest terms, aligning operations will help strengthen efforts to use healthcare resources more prudently and allow each organization to focus on its traditional strengths.

“We pursued this expanded relationship to strengthen our ability to take care of our patients more efficiently and effectively,” said Dr. Alan Kaplan, CEO of UW Health. “UW Health, for example, offers a Level 1 trauma center for both adults and children; a nationally renowned organ transplant program and burn center; and the comprehensive resources of the Carbone Cancer Center for cancer patients, among other leading resources. Meriter’s leadership in patient experience and its long-standing focus as a community healthcare provider will ensure that our new organization remains rooted in the goals and aspirations of the people we serve. Our system will be bigger, but more important, it will be better.”

The joint operating agreement (JOA) between UW Health and Meriter formalizes and expands their already significant collaboration in caring for patients. Their partnership dates back more than 50 years and includes a shared destination mother-baby care program, the Madison Surgery Center, Wisconsin Sleep, the UW Health Rehabilitation Hospital, Generations Fertility Care, and more.

The insurers (Physicians Plus, Unity and Gundersen Health Plan) are integrating to create broader network choices. In the future, UnityPoint Health – Meriter, UW Health and Gundersen Health System providers and facilities, along with many local independent doctors, will be combined into integrated health plan networks.

“Changes to the health insurance landscape are prompting health insurers to partner to gain efficiency,” said Troy Caraway, CEO of Physicians Plus and a senior vice president of UnityPoint Health. “Greater access to more products and offerings will help meet rising consumer expectations regarding the cost, coordination and experience of care.”

Healthcare Provider Integration

Meriter and UW Health are creating a unified clinical enterprise. While each will remain independent, the organizations will align finances, clinical operations and strategy, which will be led by UW Health.

Strong consumer demand for care at UW Health inpatient and outpatient facilities will be managed over time by coordinating access and care among all facilities, including Meriter hospital and clinics. This approach will minimize costly capital investments in new construction. Over a period of several years, specialty care providers employed by Meriter will join UW Health, and primary care providers at both organizations will collaborate closely.

“Patients can rest assured knowing that they will have access to care when and where they need it through one coordinated system,” said George Kamperschroer, Chair of the UnityPoint Health – Meriter Board of Directors. “By working together at a deeper level, our organizations can wholly focus on our missions of caring for our patients and community.”

Meriter will remain a senior affiliate of UnityPoint Health, but update its logo to include UW Health.

Insurance Integration

In addition to increasing access to broader networks, integrating Physicians Plus, as the newest affiliate under the Quartz brand, with Unity and Gundersen Health Plan will allow the health plans to share best practices that further enhance service to members, increase administrative efficiencies, and create more comprehensive and cost-effective networks of care.

“The health insurance industry has gone through fundamental changes during the past few years,” said Terry Bolz, President and CEO of Quartz. “These changes have allowed us to look at how we are currently doing business and identify opportunities to adapt for continued success and future growth. Integrating our insurance companies creates an opportunity for us to draw upon the best of our organizations to enhance our ability to meet future challenges and continue our tradition of service and excellence.”

Next Steps

Now that regulatory reviews are complete; all organizations are moving to integrate their operations and clinical enterprises into a unified health system.

Insurance plan members will see no immediate changes, but the insurance companies will begin working toward integrated networks featuring UW Health, Gundersen Health System and Unity Point Health – Meriter and practitioners who align with these providers.

The health providers are now able to consider Meriter facilities when deciding on which location is best equipped to care for their patients’ individual needs.

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About UW Health

UW Health is the integrated health system of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with 1,400 physicians and 16,500 staff at six hospitals and 80 outpatient sites. It is governed by the UW Hospitals and Clinics Authority and partners with UW School of Medicine and Public Health to fulfill patient care, research, education and community-service missions. For more information, visit uwhealth.org.

About UnityPoint Health – Meriter

UnityPoint Health – Meriter provides comprehensive, coordinated care to patients in the greater Madison area through our clinics, hospital and home care services. A senior affiliate of UnityPoint Health and partner of UW Health, Meriter offers primary and specialty care and is home to the busiest birthing center in Wisconsin. Meriter has repeatedly earned an overall 5-star quality rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and has multiple accolades for providing an outstanding patient experience. For more information visit: unitypoint.org/Madison.

About UnityPoint Health

UnityPoint Health is one of the nation's most integrated health systems. It has relationships with more than 280 physician clinics, 33 hospitals in metropolitan and rural communities and home care services throughout its nine regions in Iowa, western Illinois and southern Wisconsin.

UnityPoint Health entities employ more than 30,000 employees. Each year, through more than 5.6 million patient visits, UnityPoint Health, UnityPoint Clinic and UnityPoint at Home provide a full range of coordinated care to patients and families. With total annual operating revenue of \$3.9 billion, UnityPoint Health is the nation's 13th largest nonprofit health system and the fourth largest nondenominational health system in America.

UnityPoint Health provides community benefit programs and services to improve the health of people in its communities. For more information visit: unitypoint.org.

About Physicians Plus Insurance Corporation

Physicians Plus Insurance is a nationally recognized managed-care organization focused on providing high-quality, innovative products and services that help improve the health of our members and the community. Founded in 1986, Physicians Plus provides health insurance to about 65,000 members in south central Wisconsin. A progressive health insurer with an organizational commitment to preventive health and wellness, Physicians Plus has been recognized as a best place to work and one of America's Healthiest Companies and earned multiple Well Workplace Gold Awards from the Wellness Council of America. For more information visit: pplusic.com.

About Quartz

Quartz is the brand name for Unity Health Insurance and Gundersen Health Plan products. Quartz also is a health plan services company that manages the nationally recognized provider-sponsored health insurance plans – Gundersen Health Plan and Unity Health Insurance, which are co-owned by Gundersen Health System and UW Health. As a third-party administrator, Quartz services self-funded health plans. Through an extensive provider network, Quartz focuses on local community-based health care and serves 275,000 customers who live in southern and western Wisconsin, parts of Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota from offices located in Middleton, Sauk City and Onalaska, Wisconsin. For more information visit: QuartzBenefits.com.

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