



# UNDERSTANDING THE REALITIES OF HEALTHCARE: WHY WE'RE STARTING THIS CONVERSATION

*By Jason Shenefield, President and CEO, Phelps Health*

Over the past several months, I've had many conversations with people across our community—patients, families, business owners and employees—who care deeply about Phelps Health. Those conversations often come with important questions:

- Why is healthcare so expensive?
- Why do we sometimes have long waits or staffing shortages?
- Why does it feel like the system is so complicated?

These are fair and honest questions, and they deserve fair and honest answers.

At Phelps Health, we believe that trust starts with transparency. Healthcare is one of the most personal and emotional parts of our lives, and yet it's also one of the most complex industries in our country. Most people only see a small part of what goes into providing care, and it can be frustrating when things don't seem to make sense.

That's why I want to begin a conversation that takes you behind the scenes of healthcare. We'll explore some of the biggest challenges we face together, such as:

- Recruiting and keeping talented doctors, nurses and clinical staff
- The true cost of healthcare and how hospitals like ours are funded
- The impact of state and federal regulations on how we provide care
- What we're doing at Phelps Health to address these challenges while staying focused on our mission to serve you

My goal isn't to defend the system—it's to explain it. Because when people understand the "why" behind what we do, it builds trust and opens the door for collaboration and solutions.

## HEALTHCARE IS MORE PERSONAL THAN NUMBERS AND POLICIES

Behind every policy decision, every budget line and every staff shortage, there are people—our neighbors, our patients and our employees.

When a nurse stays late to comfort a patient or a physician answers a late-night call, that's the heart of healthcare. When we have to make difficult financial or staffing decisions, those are not just numbers on a page—they





affect real people we care about deeply.

The reality is that healthcare today looks very different from the way it looked even 20 years ago. Costs have risen for everything—from medical supplies and technology to utilities and insurance. Regulations have multiplied, and recruiting medical professionals to rural communities like ours has become increasingly difficult.

But through all of this, our mission remains the same: to provide high-quality, accessible care for every person who walks through our doors, regardless of their background or circumstances.

## WHY THIS SERIES MATTERS

We want to be open about the challenges we face—not to make excuses, but to make sure you understand the context in which we operate. We also want to highlight the incredible progress and innovation happening right here at Phelps Health.

Over the next few months, we'll share stories and information that help explain:

- Why recruiting and retaining great clinicians is harder than ever—and what we're doing about it
- Where your healthcare dollars really go, and why the system's structure makes affordability so complex
- How decades of government regulation have shaped the healthcare landscape—for better and for worse
- How we're building a sustainable, patient-centered future for our region

While we know that understanding the complexities of healthcare doesn't erase frustration, it can replace confusion with knowledge, and doubt with trust. And we believe you deserve clarity and truth about these issues.

### About This Series

At Phelps Health, we know that while healthcare touches everyone in our region, the system behind it can feel complicated and confusing.

**"Understanding the Realities of Healthcare"** is a series of articles and podcasts that goes behind the scenes at Phelps Health to explain the pressures, decisions and changes shaping care today.

Created by Jason Shenefield, president and CEO of Phelps Health, this series explores topics like staffing, costs, regulations and innovation—and how they impact the patients and communities we serve.

We invite you to follow along, learn with us and help us build a future that delivers the care and compassion you've come to expect from Phelps Health.

Learn more at [phelpshealth.org/realities-of-healthcare](https://phelpshealth.org/realities-of-healthcare).