

Arkansas Business

HEALTH CARE

Arkansas Health Network Saved Members \$16.8M in 2020

by **Mark Friedman**

Monday, Mar. 28, 2022 12:00 am 3 min read



Bob Sarkar, president of Arkansas Health Network

Arkansas Health Network of Little Rock continued its growth during the pandemic and saved its members \$16.8 million in 2020, the latest figures available.

AHN works with a company's self-insured plan and government agencies to help cut health care costs and improve the health of people in the plan. AHN isn't a health care or insurance plan but works closely with the employee's primary care physician to provide the best care.

"We have improved the quality of care across our network," Bob Sarkar, president and CEO of AHN, a wholly owned subsidiary of CHI St. Vincent of Little Rock, told Arkansas Business over a recent Zoom meeting.

In the upcoming weeks, AHN is getting ready to distribute about \$2 million to the providers who were part of the Medicare Shared Savings Program that AHN managed in 2020.

In 2020, AHN saved the Medicare program \$14.3 million, resulting in AHN receiving \$8.4 million, he said. AHN also saved other employers and payers about \$2.5 million for a total of \$16.8 million, Sarkar said.



In its portfolio, AHN has about 120,000 people, more than 3,100 providers and 18 hospitals in Arkansas.

“For decades now, we’ve been discussing the certain need for value-based health care models in the United States, but few have managed to successfully build programs that deliver on those promises while also maintaining a high quality of care,” Dr. Brooks Lawrence, a primary care physician and AHN board member, said via email.

Lawrence said AHN has succeeded, and it’s “consistently improving and growing year after year.”

A preliminary report shows that one employer in central Arkansas saved \$1.9 million on its employee health plan in 2021, but not all the data is in yet, Sarkar said. In 2020, that company, which Sarkar declined to name, saved \$700,000.

During the pandemic, AHN’s providers and coaches continued to encourage their members to get preventive care. “Our nurse coaches, even our network pharmacists, were involved in doing as much as they could do on a telehealth visit,” Sarkar said.

One troubling trend that emerged during the pandemic was the rise in the number of patients with behavioral health issues. One employer saw its behavioral health care claims double in 2021, Sarkar said. AHN’s medical officers and providers are meeting to work on a solution of “this huge amount ... of behavioral health cases that have been happening across the state,” he said.

AHN also partners with the Arkansas Children’s Care Network and Next Health Clinically Integrated Network of Fayetteville, which is Washington Regional Medical Center and Medical Associates of Northwest Arkansas, known as MANA.

AHN also has recently partnered with EngageMed of North Little Rock, a physician practice management services company. Sarkar said AHN is working with EngageMed to create a patient referral service that should be operating this summer.

And for the first time since it incorporated in 2013, AHN is “looking at taking higher levels of risk with employers,” Sarkar said.

Under AHN’s current contracts with members, the employer pays a “very nominal fee” for care management, Sarkar said. And if AHN lowers health care costs for the employer, the shared savings are split between AHN and the company.



But by taking more of the risk, AHN would charge a company, say, \$100 per member. If AHN keeps the health care costs under that amount, it keeps the money. If the price goes over \$100, however, AHN will cover the costs, Sarkar said. “That is unprecedented in Arkansas,” he said.

Sarkar said AHN is looking at working with a company or companies and hopes to have a contract signed to start on Jan. 1.

In This Story

[Medicare](#), [Washington Regional Medical Center](#), [CHI St. Vincent](#), [Medical Associates of Northwest Arkansas](#), [Bob Sarkar](#), [Arkansas Health Network](#), [EngageMed](#), [COVID-19](#), [Brooks Lawrence](#), [Arkansas Children's Care Network](#), [Next Health Clinically Integrated Network](#)