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## Strengthening New Orleans by treating people, rather than disease

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To solve a problem, you can't just treat the symptom — you have to address the root causes. This is also true when tackling the biggest challenges facing our health care system and our communities, alike.

In New Orleans, residents overwhelmingly suffer from diabetes, congestive heart failure and behavioral health problems — conditions that are all on the rise. For too long, the system has been focused on treating symptoms. The best way to reduce health care costs, however, is to focus more on addressing the underlying causes of illness and chronic conditions and identify solutions to help people lead their healthiest lives possible.

That's the goal, and the challenge, of a new collaboration launched by Humana and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation — to turn the health care system's focus to health rather than disease, and make sustainable, positive impacts on communities.

We will start in New Orleans by identifying and understanding the barriers to health and what we can do — in partnership with the community — to remove those obstacles.

One of the key deliverables of this collaboration will be a publicly available report

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summarizing the lessons learned from a community health improvement process in Louisiana, and the community partnerships formed that go beyond health care. It will bring a deeper understanding of the barriers, challenges and priorities that are critical to making and sustaining improvements in the health of Louisianans.

This report extends the vision of both our organizations. In 2015, Humana announced a campaign to improve the health of the communities we serve by 20 percent by 2020. This complements Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's own goal, to build a

culture of health in America that will allow everyone to live their healthiest life possible, no matter where they live, work, play or learn, no matter the color of their skin or the size of their family income.

Our partnership will help us understand how we can best address the social determinants of health in New Orleans — those conditions in which people are born, age, live and work. We can identify the key contributors in a given community who play a role in addressing these factors, and collaborate with them to ensure that community members have access to what they need to

maintain health and wellness.

By collaborating with doctors, for instance, to deliver an integrated, holistic approach to health that focuses on preventive care, behavioral health, reducing disease progression and incentivizing health choices, we are well-positioned to help people have more healthy days than ever before.

We are using the healthy days measurement developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which asks people four simple questions to rate their recent days of physical and mental health, and has been validated for measuring population health.

We will conduct research in New Orleans to better understand how our collaborations with the community partners yield cost reductions, changes in patient behaviors and more healthy days over the next five years.

Humana and the foundation are committed to tackling the most pressing challenges both in our health care system and in the community, as reflected by our collaboration in New Orleans. Only then can we truly stop focusing all the attention on treating sickness — and start focusing on improving health.

*Bruce Broussard is president and CEO of Humana Inc. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey is president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.*