What are the Implications of Retail Health Clinics for Payers and Providers?
Retail clinics are impacting the broader U.S. landscape by offering a new, lower-cost care channel. As opposed to traditional providers, retail health clinics offer convenience and access without the need to schedule appointments, and also offering extended hours both on the weekdays and on the weekends. Retail health clinics offer many consumers a convenient way to access healthcare.

For payers, clinics offer an attractive, low-cost channel for healthcare delivery. Increasingly, we’re seeing our paired clients offer lower co-pay – or even waive co-pays for clinic visits – trying to funnel volume that would have gone to relatively more expensive urgent care or more expensive emergency room visits to a relatively affordable retail clinic setting.

For providers, the implications for retail clinics are both positive and sometimes negative. On the positive side, there are some providers that use retail clinics as a way to offer after-hours access to their patients. On the other side, some providers may view retail clinics as competition or as a potential loss of revenue or patient volume in their own setting.

As providers consider their response to retail clinics, they really have two choices. Some of them offer electronic medical record data that goes back and forth between the clinics, effectively becoming a partner and incorporating the clinic into their ecosystem. Whereas others choose to compete, and so some of that competition might come in the form of extended office hours on certain days or extended coverage via physicians’ extenders like nurse practitioners. Regardless of the choice of the physician, the patient is a winner.