

Can Healthcare Care for the Impoverished?

By: Josiah Robinson



Healthcare for the impoverished is a landmine. If it is ever stumbled upon in conversation the room quickly explodes with ideas, opinions, and emotions. Imagine the magnitude of the discussion between deans, doctors, directors and other heavy hitters in healthcare. The Edge of Chaos was ground zero for this barrage of conversation.

This particular discussion was facilitated by Clarus Consulting, which had the difficult task of blending many, distinct voices into a choir of solutions. Clarus posed three questions to direct this chorus: What is working well in Birmingham? How can we support and build on what is working well? What has not been tried? These questions sparked the wildfire of conversation that filled the discussion.

This discussion blazed for hours, pausing only for a coffee break. There were diverse ideas shared, but a few overarching themes stood out. First of all, there must be centralized coordination of resources either from a political champion or an association of institutions. Next, healthcare has to meet people where they are, either in clinics, churches, or community centers to provide preventative care. Primary care cannot be done in the emergency room. This leads to the last theme, preventative care and treatment must be done together to increase the wellbeing of those in Birmingham.

After these ideas were finalized there was a sense of clarity in the room, quickly followed by a call to responsibility. This had to be more than a brainstorming session; it had to be a catalyst for change. In the problematic world in which we live, it can be argued that there is no problem more wicked than poverty. However, wicked problems like healthcare for the impoverished were the reason The Edge of Chaos was conceived. The Edge of Chaos is the perfect venue to spark a conversation about this monumental problem and this conversation not only sparked, but exploded.

This explosion needs to be exposed to the public, and what better way to achieve this than with a local publication? Weld publisher Mark Kelly has collaborated with the Edge of Chaos to create a six part series aiming to solve poverty in Birmingham. Weld releases an article about a topic, and then an interdisciplinary discussion is held to forge concrete solutions. This particular discussion is the fourth in the series, preceded by Housing, Transportation, and Education. The next discussions will cover Employment and Race. Every meeting had high stakes, but this discussion had immediate effects on the health and wellness of the large number of impoverished people in the Birmingham area. Weld will publish an article after the last discussion to lay out the themes proposed by each session and actions they will evoke. Time will tell how these themes will be utilized in making Birmingham healthier, happier, and more prosperous.