

Roger Merrill, MD

Chief Medical Officer

Perdue Farms Incorporated



Roger Merrill, MD joined Perdue Farms Incorporated in 1990 as Corporate Medical Director and assumed his current position of Chief Medical Officer in 2003. He has been in the active practice of internal medicine in Salisbury, MD for 25 years. Additionally, he has served as Chief of Staff of Peninsula Regional Medical Center, a 425-bed tertiary care institution; member of the Board of Trustees of PRMC for eight years; President of the County Medical Society; and on numerous boards of medical and QA organizations, including the Delmarva Foundation for Medical Care (the QIO [formerly PRO] for Maryland and DC).

Perdue Farms Incorporated is the Nation's third largest integrated poultry processing company and has 18 major processing facilities in 12 states employing 22,000 associates. In addition, there is a substantial recycling and agribusiness division with numerous facilities, primarily in the Southeast.

At Perdue, Dr. Merrill has led efforts in the following areas:

- Development of case management protocols and systems for Workers Compensation including establishment of physician networks; development of protocols for prevention and treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome, acute back pain, and other diseases; and integration of safety and ergonomics into the overall patient-centered schema. Through these efforts, Perdue has experienced an 80% reduction in Workers Compensation costs and lost time recordables and the virtual elimination of carpal tunnel surgeries, putting Perdue Farms' costs at 25% under poultry benchmarks and OSHA recordables at 40% under the national average.
- Design, development, and implementation of an integrated health care delivery system in rural areas serving 22,000 employees (approximately 50,000 lives). The system has a strong emphasis on primary care with on-site medical clinics—called Wellness Centers—staffed by family practitioners, pediatricians, internists, podiatrists, obstetrician-gynecologists, physical therapists, midwives, neurologists, chemical dependency counselors, physiatrists, and others drawn from the local medical community. It includes specialty arrangements (with various innovative financing schemes) and a Perdue proprietary comprehensive PPO network of hospitals and specialty physicians where beneficiaries are directed with financial drivers. In turn, Dr. Merrill has negotiated various financial agreements with the hospitals, doctors, and other providers: discounts, DRG schedules, Relative Value Schedules, and other “currencies” such as provision of otherwise billable services without charge. An innovative program resulting in ‘Best in Class’ generic drug percentage rounds out the Medical Plan features.
- Establishment of Wellness programs at plant sites with education, early detection, and intervention on non-occupational illnesses.
- Creation and implementation of a proprietary Health Improvement Program (HIP). HIP has three major thrusts: (1) Treating controllable disease, (2) lifestyle improvements, and (3) creation of a corporate environment of health. The Program includes a health risk appraisal with biometrics driving a “Personal Plan for Health.” That Plan is characterized by identification of the most

significant lifestyle-related items personalized to each individual. It then adds a component of regular interaction with health educators to track and improve those items, and ultimately a remeasurement phase. This Health Improvement Program, which won the Secretary of HHS "Innovation in Prevention" award in 2006 and runner-up status in the C. Everett Koop National Health Award in 2005, has resulted in a 25% improvement in measurable health status in the 80% of plant population that participated.

As a result of these interventions, Perdue has experienced a medical inflation rate (*minus* 12% over 5 years) and a per capita cost well below national and poultry averages, and measurably improved health status for Perdue associates.