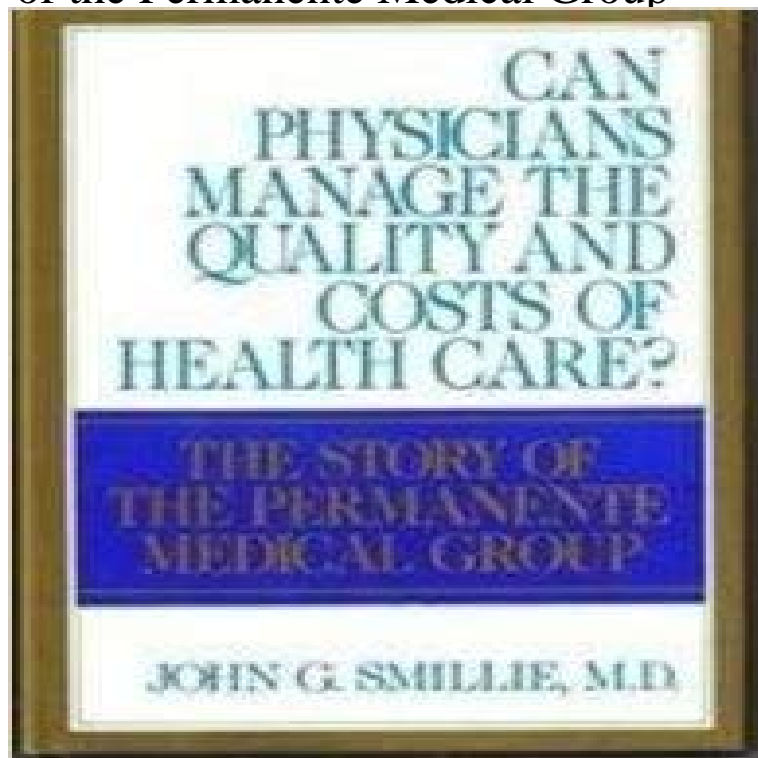


## Can Physicians Manage the Quality and Costs of Health Care?: The Story of the Permanente Medical Group



It has been said that nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come. That was the case in 1933, when Dr. Sidney R. Garfield first envisioned the concept of prepaid comprehensive group medical practice. It was the case several years later, when Henry J. Kaiser applied the idea to very large groups of workers. It was the case at the time of publication, when HMOs were changing the face of health care delivery throughout the nation. And last not least, it is also the case today, when Kaiser Permanente provides a model for those aspiring to a single-payer system. John G. Smillie, M.D., has given us a full and fascinating account of the remarkable Kaiser Permanente story in particular, and the ongoing emergence of HMOs in general. The two are inextricably linked, as Kaiser Permanente stands as the quintessential HMO. In tracing the history of an idea, the book also tells the broader story of the evolution of HMOs and managed health care. In fact, the more complex the health care industry becomes, the more relevant are the issues faced and resolved by Kaiser Permanente over the years, such as providing high-quality medical care while controlling costs; instilling a sense of ownership among physicians by asking them to take responsibility for managing both quality and costs; maintaining an organization-wide focus on the success of the program as a whole; and working with government regulators, the public, and consumer groups. From Dr. Garfield's first tentative steps into an unknown health care territory, to Henry Kaiser's aggressive application of a then-radical idea... across decades of conflicts between physicians and business people over managerial control... through myriad struggles for professional respect, public acceptance, and national growth -- ultimately resulting in universal accolades and extraordinary success -- here is the inspiring and

instructive tale of one of the health care industry's most influential organizations, both then and now.

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