



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Syn·chro·nic·i·ty (sing'krə-nis'ī-tē)

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ

The American Heritage Dictionary defines *synchronicity* as “coincidence of events that seem to be meaningfully related.” Sometimes in our professional lives we are fortunate enough to be part of something that is truly special—a moment or two when we can witness the coming together of the right mix of people with a shared purpose in the right setting at the right time.

Just such a moment happened at UCAOA's 2006 Fall Conference in Phoenix, AZ in October. If you were there, then you know what I mean.

The excitement was palpable as attendees were able to connect with each other and the faculty, to speak the same language, problem-solve together, and go home with renewed energy and focus for taking their urgent care centers forward.

We also got to experience some great energy just a couple of weeks later at the National Association of Occupational Health Professionals conference in Philadelphia. As many of you obviously know (considering that about 65% of urgent care centers also have occupational health services), occupational medicine services can be an important addition to your urgent care center, providing a steady stream of revenue to help offset the ups and downs of the cash-flow cycle experienced by some centers. (UCAOA Treasurer and frequent conference speaker Kevin Ralofsky touches on the subject of cash flow, as well as other financial challenges, in *A Delicate Balance: Managing Your Practice, Caring for Your Patients*, beginning on page 29 of this month's issue.)

For those of you who couldn't join us in Phoenix or Philadelphia, I wanted to share a few informational tidbits from those conferences:

Cash-only doesn't work. Most centers that started out as cash-pay only have had to change their policy to accept patient insurance because the volume of cash-paying patients

just isn't enough to sustain a center. Many still offer a cash-pay discount to incentivize that behavior, however. (To see a breakdown on the various methods patients use to pay their bills, see this month's Developing Data graph on page 40.)

“Occupational medicine services can provide a steady stream of revenue to help offset the ups and downs of the cash-flow cycle.”

Corner your x-ray. If you are building a new urgent care center, put your x-ray suite in the corner of your building. You should save money because the two external walls don't require additional shielding.

Keeping score. You want to measure your provider performance, but you don't have national performance benchmarks to measure against? It's true that such benchmarks are hard to come by. One solution: measure your providers against each other. You can start by creating an overall baseline of all of your provider data averaged together, then compare the providers individually against the collective. It's not a perfect solution, but it will give you some indication of how they stack up.

Next Stop: Daytona Beach

As we move toward the end of the year, we are most looking forward to finally sharing the details of the UCAOA 2007 Annual Convention (May 9-12, 2007 in Daytona Beach, FL) with you.

We will offer four concurrent pre-conference sessions. These are focused one-day programs that drill down into specific areas for a full immersion into a topic.

If you are new to one of the following aspects of urgent care, we highly recommend attending one of these sessions prior to the main conference:

■ **Starting a New Urgent Care Center**

If you are considering opening your first or second



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center, or are already in the process, this session—which will be led by both topic experts and on-the-ground owners and operators—is designed to help you avoid common mistakes and pick up a trick or two.

■ **Integrating Occupational Medicine**

As we mentioned earlier, bringing occ med into your clinic can be a significant financial help as well as a service to the employers and employees in your community. Maximizing the benefit to your practice requires specific preparation and marketing considerations, however.

■ **Essentials of Urgent Care Billing**

Specifically for those new to the industry, this program details the billing and coding issues that are particular to urgent care (and there are many). Learn how to maximize the reimbursement you receive for your services.

■ **Procedure Clinic**

This is where the rubber meets the road; all the good business practices in the world won't add up to much without the clinical expertise and patient care to back it up. This program will focus on treatment techniques necessary for good urgent care.

Remember, that's just a rundown of the one-day pre-conference sessions. The main conference will feature three concurrent tracks, as detailed below. The courses will run simultaneously, so you may want to bring more than one person from your organization to cover all of your areas of interest.

Clinical Track

This program will cover clinical topics ranging from evaluating the abdominal pain patient to eye infections to shoulder and knee injuries to pediatrics and EMG services. In addition, the Clinical Track attendees will have some joint sessions with the Business Track in areas like medical malpractice and a roundtable discussion.

Introductory Business Track

This track takes the broadest view of the essentials of the business side of urgent care medicine. Topics include policy and procedure manuals, billing and collections, marketing strategies, basics of occupational medicine, and managed care contracting.

Advanced Business Track

Designed for our past Business Track attendees and those who have been delivering urgent care for several years,

this program takes a closer look at some of the more advanced business topics: leadership development, staff training and the physician's role when integrating occupational medicine, and advanced managed care contracting issues. Breakout sessions with both of our keynote speakers are also planned.

So, if the idea of synchronicity appeals to you, you're certain to find it in Daytona Beach May 9-12, 2007. Plan to join us there.

“The UCAOA website has been redesigned to help you connect with each other and to access the online resources we have for you. Visit www.ucaoa.org to check it out.”

New Projects

Besides planning the national conference, we've been hard at work developing new communication tools for UCAOA members.

The UCAOA website has been completely redesigned with an eye toward helping you to connect with each other and to access all the online resources that we have for you. Visit www.ucaoa.org to check it out.

In addition, we are asking for your help in launching a project to help address a need of new startups, as well as existing centers. The *Policy and Procedure Manual* we're producing will offer good examples of policies and procedures that are already working well in urgent care centers. We are not asking you to divulge the full content of your manual, just to share a section or two that might serve as an example of what a policy and procedure manual *should* look like. This will be a collaborative project as we compile sections from contributors throughout the country.

If you have a section you are willing to share, please e-mail me. However, please *don't* e-mail if you're looking for a copy of the manual right now. We're just beginning this project and we will make it available to all members as soon as it is ready.

I hope you enjoy this issue of **JUCM** *The Journal of Urgent Care Medicine* and that you will find a few synchronicities of your own this month. ■