



# The Crow and the Pitcher

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ, MA

“A thirsty crow found a pitcher with some water in it, but so little was there that, try as she might, she could not reach it with her beak, and it seemed as though she would die of thirst within sight of the remedy.

At last, she hit upon a clever plan.

She began dropping pebbles into the pitcher, and with each pebble the water rose a little higher until at last it reached the brim, and the knowing bird was enabled to quench her thirst.”

**Moral:** *Necessity is the mother of invention.*

This Aesop fable may be familiar to many of you. Also familiar may be the feeling that the crow is having: many of you have asked us, why is there virtually no data about urgent care centers out there?

Regularly, I get calls like this:

“We are working on a business plan to open a center...”

“We are considering investing in a new startup center...”

“We are trying to restructure the staffing for our center...”

They all start differently, but they all end the same: “...and I've been searching the Internet for hours and can't find anything on urgent care. I did find your site, however, and thought I'd call...”

These folks are all staring into the pitcher in the fable.

As you may know, for the past two years UCAOA has conducted informal annual surveys of our constituents, asking questions ranging from basic demographics to billing and staffing. This has been our way of dropping rocks into the pitcher, to help raise the water level a bit.

This month, *JUCM* reports the results of the latest survey (page 30).

While we appreciate all of the contributions and work that

goes into our current survey method, we also realize that it is in its infancy and currently cannot be reliably translated into national trends in urgent care—which is what the industry sorely needs.

The UCAOA Board of Directors has made this a priority for the coming years, and significant resources have been allocated toward using proven outside researchers to develop and execute a survey program that will incorporate the rigor and breadth we are all looking for.

One other problem with our benchmarking survey is that it only comes out once each year. The developing of detailed questions, gathering of responses, etc., take a lot of time and effort by the Benchmarking Committee members—all volunteers—so right now once a year is all that is possible. However, the committee has come up with a new survey medium, called QuickPolls, that will provide a way for UCAOA members and website visitors to get regular snapshots of information on an ongoing basis.

UCAOA's new QuickPolls allow us to collect and share data with you more often. While they are not scientifically rigorous, QuickPolls will elicit anecdotal data on a variety of topics to let you see what's happening in other practices across the country. These polls will ask one multiple-choice question and instantly share the results to date when you vote.

We plan to update the QuickPolls area at least once a month. However, the critical element in the success of the QuickPolls will be input—the more participants in the polls, the better the results.

The polls should take no more than 30 seconds to respond to, so we hope that you will add a reminder to your calendar to visit the website at least monthly to contribute to the current QuickPoll.

If you have questions you'd like to see asked in a future QuickPoll, e-mail me and we'll add them into the lineup for a future poll. (Bear in mind that all questions must be multiple choice.)

But for now, sit back and take a long cool drink of information from our survey report—we hope it will start some dialogue in your practice and be a refresher for you as you head into the summer. ■



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