



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Embracing the Future, Leveraging Change

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ, MA

You may have seen this title phrase before. It's on the cover of the 2008 UCAOA Urgent Care National Convention brochure. It's one of those jazzy marketing phrases that look good on a brochure cover and are supposed to get you excited about what's inside and what's coming at the convention.

But does it really mean anything? It's one of those "10,000 feet" phrases that it's hard to disagree with. Of course we should embrace the future (fighting it is futile). Of course we should leverage change (rather than be steamrolled or left behind).

So what?

One thing I bet is true about most of you working in urgent care is that you do like a challenge.

Uncertain future? Bring it on.

Competition entering the market? Bring it on.

Increasing scrutiny? Bring it on.

You are confident enough that you and your centers are good enough to weather the storms and come out still seaworthy on the other side. You are ready for the future. Bring it on.

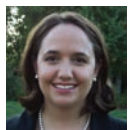
But being *ready* to meet the future is not the same as *embracing* it—that means reaching out for the future, preparing for it, thinking about it often—*getting ahead of it*.

That's what we are here to help you do, and a part of what the New Orleans Convention is all about.

On the Other Hand...

In contrast to getting ahead of the future, the idea of getting ahead of *change* is almost laughable. It's already here! It happens every day, all day. Someone calls in sick. The flu finally arrives (hooray?). Drugs change. Insurance changes. Today's research contradicts yesterday's research. New codes. New protocols. New paperwork.

Change isn't something that needs a "change strategy"



Lou Ellen Horwitz is executive director of the Urgent Care Association of America. She may be contacted at lhorwitz@ucaoa.org.

anymore. Change is *normal*. Change is like breathing, or heartbeats; in other words, if it's not present, you're probably dead.

So the question now is one of leverage—not "dealing with it," but using it to our advantage to be able to do things other providers cannot.

Your answers to the following questions may reveal a lot about your clinic's state of readiness:

- Is your center really good at dealing with the changes you see on a daily basis?
- Is your staff well-trained, well-informed, and flexible (clinically and administratively alike)?
- When a new form or treatment protocol comes out, does it bring you to a temporary halt or are you and your staff so good at understanding, disseminating, integrating, and moving on that your patients don't even notice?
- If you have more than one center, when something gets decided "on high," how well and quickly does it trickle down to the front lines?

In practical terms, this concept can be very hard to bring to reality. It requires some letting go, and some stepping up, and if you are in a multicenter system or hospital-owned, it will require some speaking up—and learning how to make a case for yourself (probably over and over).

But hey, we do like a challenge, don't we? Maybe not every day, but the challenges out there and the thrill of meeting those challenges successfully is what we show up for.

The Next Big Thing

If you aren't already signed up to join us in New Orleans, I really think you should come (and not because it serves my interests as executive director).

Meeting the future head-on is exactly the kind of thing everyone talks about when we are together at conferences, and it's a great thing to observe from my position. It must be absolutely fantastic to experience. Come and tap into that magic so you can take a little home with you to your center.

See you soon. ■