



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hearing Voices

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ, MA

Talk of healthcare woes and healthcare reform is everywhere. The system is broken, the costs are out of control, the providers are scarce and getting scarcer, and on and on and on.

Every now and then, urgent care is mentioned as an area that is actually working and serving the need it was created to serve. What's curious to me is why it's not more ubiquitous in the conversations.

While we are seeing more and more coverage in the media, and patients are certainly filling up your centers nationwide, I can recall urgent care being referred to only once in the context of policy making. Why is that, and what can we, as an industry, do about it?

Though we as an association are perhaps comparatively young and small, as an industry urgent care is well populated—and growing. As a group we provide at least a partial solution to America's healthcare woes, but we may be so focused on getting the job done (seeing patients!) that we are not paying enough attention to getting our voices heard.

If you recall from that wonderful Dr. Seuss book, *Horton Hears a Who!*, the Whos didn't elect a representative to "Yawp!" on their behalf; it took every single one of their voices for them to be heard at last. Now, we are not all living on a speck on a flower and about to be boiled in oil (at least I don't think we are)—but I do think we are all in agreement that there is a lack of awareness about urgent care at many important levels.

The first place your voices need to be heard is actually the easiest for you—at your local level. Do your local mayor, alderman, congressperson, representative, school systems, media (print, radio, TV, Internet), sports teams, state clinical societies, every physician in town, retail clinics, hospitals, chambers of commerce, fire department, police station....know you exist? Better yet, do you have a *relationship* with these people?



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Everyone knows someone else that you probably don't know. Everyone is in a circle of influence that you may not be a part of yet. Whether it's a children's play group or a healthcare reform task group, you never, never, never know who may put your name or your clinic's name in the right place at the right time. I can guarantee, however, that if they've never heard of you, the likelihood of that goes down considerably!

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So, while you are working on your "grassroots" areas, what is UCAOA doing? There are two main initiatives to help move this concept forward:

1. Legislative and Regulatory Committee: This group is looking at ways we can be more involved and/or accessible for participation in the legislative and regulatory processes in our states and at the national level.
2. Foundation Development Committee: This group is working to create a foundation where industry resources can be pooled to support a variety of activities for furthering urgent care, including research and surveys, training programs, community benefit analysis, and other projects not yet conceived.

Your support of these efforts will determine how fast and how far we are able to go in accomplishing the many projects you want us to undertake. In the coming months, we'll share more about the specific plans for spending those resources so you can determine how you and your center(s) want to contribute.

In the meantime, we encourage you all to reach out to your communities.

Let's see, if the average urgent care center has 16.9 employees (11.8 clinical, 5.1 administrative), and there are about 8,000 centers...that, my friends, is a lot of "Yawps"! ■