



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Notes From the Convention



As I write this, the annual convention of the Urgent Care Association of America (UCAOA) is in full swing in Las Vegas. This year's assembly is the largest gathering of urgent care professionals in the world...ever. With well over 700 attendees, the energy is palpable.

The excitement surrounding the discipline and the industry has never been greater as more and more physicians, entrepreneurs, health systems and others clamor for a sample of this exciting wave in healthcare. My observations from the convention can be summed up into a few salient take-home messages:

The field of urgent care has become more specialized and its representation has followed. We now have separate organizations to represent the many interests and facets of the specialty. The Urgent Care College of Physicians (UCCOP), launched last year with the support of UCAOA, is making significant strides developing a unified voice for physicians who practice in this setting. Once managed by committees within UCAOA, the specialty development, education, and academic initiatives each has its own home.

The distinction between clinical and industry functions is now clear. Each has a separate organizational representation and both groups are committed to working together. Their shared goal is to build a discipline with greater definition, legitimacy, and strength so that urgent care professionals have a more relevant and representative voice within the "house of medicine" and about our health care delivery system as a whole. For more information about these organizations, visit www.ucaoa.org and www.uccop.org.

The formal launch of the Urgent Care Foundation at the convention generated a great deal of interest and excitement. For the first time ever, a foundation has emerged that is solely dedicated to funding education and research projects within the discipline of urgent care. The critical nature of the foundation's mission cannot be overstated. As with any other health care field, the strength and legitimacy of urgent care as a discipline is the most critical factor for the specialty's future growth and sustainability. No clinical field before us has survived without a dedicated effort to support this mission. This fact is underappreciated by most urgent care professionals, but we must learn the valuable lessons of history.

Programs funded by it will not show a direct or tangible return on investment, and therefore, will not generate the short-term excitement that surrounds other initiatives. Industry stakeholders will ask, "What does this do for my business? I don't have a 'marketing' budget for that." Clinicians will ask, "How does this impact ME?" The cold hard truth is we are a house of cards without the Foundation. And urgent care has no future in any sustainable form that we can be proud of if we ignore it. Formal training programs like the clinical fellowships in urgent care are paramount for the development of what is termed the "Core Competency Document" for the entire discipline. It literally "defines" what we do, how we do it, and why urgent care is unique in content and delivery. Without a Core Competency Document, urgent care will not exist in the modern "house of medicine" and the specialty will not evolve to represent the highest level of care and quality possible.

Fellowships are not about creating a pipeline of adequately trained physicians. They are, instead, the formative laboratories for developing the specialty. Educational outreach, clinical and health services research are similarly positioned to weave urgent care firmly into the fabric of health care delivery, once and for all.

Everyone I spoke with at the UCAOA convention wants urgent care to have a prominent role in healthcare. Supporting the foundation and its programs is our most critical step in that direction. UCAOA has taken the unprecedented step of providing a seed grant of \$25,000 in support of the Urgent Care Foundation effort. UCAOA also has offered a challenge grant of up to \$75,000 to help generate momentum for the Foundation's fundraising. We cannot let this opportunity to advance our field slip by. The time has come for industry and clinicians alike to support this effort to solidify our future. For more information about the Urgent Care Foundation, go to: www.urgentcarefoundation.org. ■

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