



Preparations for a New Decade for Urgent Care

■ P. JOANNE RAY

Proactively embarking on renovations and changes that position us for future growth is paramount. As urgent care providers and owners, and the vendors who support our every need, you live this motto every day. And, over time, you recognize that renovation is needed to start anew, to expand and improve, to keep up, and to better serve your constituency.

UCAOA is no different and is focused on what is needed as we enter into our second decade. The growth of our industry is evident in every community, in our sold-out exhibit halls and well-attended conferences, in our steadily growing membership, in the increasing inquiries we receive from mainstream media, and in the impetus driving UCAOA programs and activities. Each step is carefully calculated and made with you in mind. In this case, the “you” is an incredibly diverse group of stakeholders with equally diverse needs—yet with very similar goals. Here are just a few examples of what we are seeing and the programs and activities UCAOA is moving ahead with on your behalf:

- **Getting the message out and educating influencers.** Placement, interviews, and information exchanges with outlets such as: *USA Today*, *AARP Magazine*, *National Public Radio*, *Parents Magazine*, and numerous local and regional newspapers, as well as recent strategic dialogue with the *Wall Street Journal*. Stories covered ranged from the growth of urgent care to its role in health care reform, to the cost of health care (and the positive role of urgent care), to reducing total costs of care by substituting urgent care visits for many ER visits, to freestanding emergency departments and their effect on urgent care centers. Links to these and other stories and coverage are available on the UCAOA web site and within UConnect.



P. Joanne Ray is chief executive officer of the Urgent Care Association of America. She may be contacted at jray@ucaoa.org.

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- **Helping you to reposition your centers in the era of health care reform.** Significant resources have been focused to provide education, guidance, and tools to help you position your centers in the best way. Additional resources will be released this month. As John Harris noted during our Fall Conference general session address (available free of charge to members), urgent care centers have three strategic responses to new payment models: active participant, good partner, and wait and see. While we don’t know exactly what tomorrow will bring, we do believe that creating strategic partnerships will result in benefit from gains in market share.
- **Building resources and awareness for legislative and regulatory changes.** Local and regional legislative entities and payors are beginning to take positions that may not be in the best interest of urgent care. UCAOA is organizing at the state and the federal level to create positive dialogue and drive dialogue to make sure the correct facts are being presented and the proper story is told.
- **Gaining further insight into the pulse and trends of our members and industry.** The outcomes of recent membership and educational needs assessment surveys, along with conference surveys and our biannual Benchmarking Study (watch for this in early January), will inform UCAOA leaders as they come together at the end of January to take a critical look at the priorities and strategies needed to best represent you in the second decade of UCAOA—the leading association representing the multi-disciplinary interests of urgent care.

Stay tuned! This next chapter in our history is shaping up to be even more exciting and much, much faster-moving than our first. It takes a village, and we’ll be counting on you to join us and play a key role. ■