



Reach Out and Get Involved

■ ROBERT R. KIMBALL, MD, FCFP

If you are reading this, you have some involvement in our industry as an owner, manager, clinician, or vendor. Your national organization, the Urgent Care Association of America (UCAOA), has made tremendous strides in recent years to represent us nationally through its vibrant Health and Public Policy Committee and a strong consultant-lobbyist in Washington. We have been to Washington and met with movers and shakers, and we plan to do so again this fall. With all the talk and new regulations promoting the remodeling of primary care as the salvation of health care in America, it is very important that we be on the radar of Medicare and the other big players.

To some extent, the degree of influence we exert will complement the experiences of the bureaucrats and politicians and their families, in your clinics, in their own hometowns. The quality of work we provide every day in our urgent care clinics speaks to the growing importance of urgent care in our communities and helps make the case that urgent care should play an important role in healthcare reform as a partner to primary care—and yes, even to hospitals. Our focus on acute-care medicine can certainly help with the overcrowding in emergency departments. And some of us can play a role in bridging a patient's discharge from the hospital, returning them to their primary-care provider, and even reducing readmissions.

UCAOA depends upon volunteers. We necessarily tend to focus on the national scene even though, as we all know, the rubber meets the road at the state level. We have developed a memorandum of understanding template to define the relationship between us, nationally, and state or regional chapters. We have two groups almost ready to go, representing a terrific milestone for us. Also, we are identifying key contacts to monitor activity in each state while building state-level resources on our website.



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It is important to recognize that the power, the driving force behind this organization, is people like you, the volunteers who populate your committees and your board of directors. To ensure our collective success, we must enhance our political footprint in every state and involve volunteers who represent all models of urgent care. This starts with you. Join a UCAOA committee (<https://ucaoa.site-ym.com/?Committees>) that reflects your interests. Reach out and get involved in your local community through the Chamber of Commerce, local causes and charities, an interview on your local radio station, or a letter to the editor. Get to know your state and national representatives. The point is that there are myriad ways to improve our visibility and influence. Download the UCAOA Media Member Toolkit (<https://ucaoa.site-ym.com/store/ListProducts.aspx?catid=452675>) for more ideas.

Gaining political capital *before* there is a major issue—and the issues are starting to come—is key. We need some friends in high places and low places, nationally and locally. We need the payers and players to understand the benefit we bring to health care in general and to our local communities. Access, affordability, convenience: this is how we want people to perceive urgent care. Please help us give this industry a stronger, more secure role on the healthcare stage. Get involved today. ■