

The Gateway2Better Network— A Member Benefit Coming in 2019

■ LAUREL STOIMENOFF, PT, CHC

Urgent care started as a healthcare disruptor. Let's shake things up again. In late November, the \$69 billion merger of Aetna and CVS Health officially closed with the goal of transforming the delivery of healthcare. Whether they will be successful remains an unknown, but there is little doubt that change is coming, and it will be disruptive. The founders of our industry were innovators and disruptors alike, and on-demand medicine brought consumers previously unimaginable access to convenient, high-value healthcare. An article in *Forbes* distinguished between the two: "Disruptors are innovators, but not all innovators are disruptors—in the same way that a square is a rectangle but not all rectangles are squares."¹

So, as change takes place around us, we must be vigilant and seek disruptive opportunities. Despite industry consolidation and in contrast to the retail clinic market, urgent care remains relatively fragmented. While there has been some industry consolidation, the top 15 multisite urgent care organizations account for less than 20% of the entire industry. Consequently, the Urgent Care Association (UCA) is often approached by entities seeking access to urgent care services, either regionally or nationally. This ask occurs so frequently that it's time to seize the opportunity while also enhancing the benefits of being a UCA member. I've quoted industry leaders who see the value in collaboration citing the aphorism, "a rising tide raises all boats." UCA can consolidate the industry via an urgent care network and bring *new* opportunities to your door.

An Alternative to the Commercial Payer

The 2018 edition of *Competition in Health Insurance: A Comprehensive Study of U.S. Markets*, published by the American Medical Association (AMA), identified that more than half of all states' commercial health insurance markets were less competitive

than the prior year, concluding that "the majority of health insurance markets in the United States are highly concentrated. Coupled with evidence on their anticompetitive behavior, this strongly suggests that health insurers are exercising market power in many parts of the country and, in turn, *causing competitive harm to consumers and providers of care.*" Year after year, the UCA Benchmarking Report has demonstrated that the lion's share of urgent care center revenue is in the commercial payer bucket. And while a solid payer relations strategy is imperative for the urgent care owner/operator (as well as the UCA), it is also a good strategy to reduce dependence on any dominant part of an industry lifeline. The Gateway2Better Network will provide a vehicle for accessing new revenue streams including, but not limited to, *direct-to-consumer* and *direct-to-employer* strategies.

Low Risk. High Reward. The Gateway2Better Network Vision

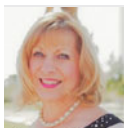
UCA organizational members will be able to join the network via a simple contracting process. The network will notify centers in the network when there are new business opportunities. At that point the member center may opt in or opt out of that particular opportunity. Little to lose. Lots to gain.

Clayton Christenson of the Harvard Business School coined the term "disruptive innovation." He said, "Disruptive innovations are not breakthrough technologies that make good products better; rather they are innovations that make products and services more accessible and affordable, thereby making them available to a much larger population."² Sounds like urgent care.

Learn much more about the Gateway2Better Network at UCA's Annual Convention & Expo, April 7-10 in beautiful West Palm Beach, Florida. Let's come together, rise up, and disrupt again! ■

References

1. Howard C Disruption vs innovation: what's the difference? *Forbes*. March 27, 2013. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolinehoward/2013/03/27/you-say-innovator-i-say-disruptor-whats-the-difference/#2boeoeff6f43>. Accessed December 5, 2018.
2. Christensen Institute. Disruptive innovation. Available at www.christenseninstitute.org/key-concepts/disruptive-innovation-2/. Accessed December 5, 2018.



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