

Overwhelmed

■ LAUREL STOIMENOFF, PT, CHC

As the COVID-19 pandemic raged on, a physician at the end of his emergency department shift at a New York City hospital was being interviewed. He kept repeating, “We are overwhelmed.” And while our work at the Urgent Care Association (UCA) pales in comparison to what the frontline healthcare workers are experiencing, we too are *overwhelmed* in every context of the word.

This month, UCA was planning to host what we knew would be our best, and best attended, convention in the history of the association. Canceling it was overwhelming and disappointing. We knew the decision not only meant a lost opportunity to network with exhibitors and attendees, but it would also create substantial financial challenges for UCA going forward. We subsequently heard from so many members who were (and are) struggling due to patients sheltering in place, a scarcity of personal protective equipment (PPE), lack of testing supplies, a need to rework processes in response to a never-before-encountered pathogen, and dealing with quarantined or, worse yet, infected employees.

But being overwhelmed comes in different forms, and though not a comprehensive list, we at UCA are also *overwhelmed* by:

- The members who are sharing and collaborating in unprecedented ways on the UCA COVID-19 Listserv—policies, signage, and best practices. The community has united and former competitors are now allied in pursuit of the greater good.
- The exhibitors who had intended on supporting us at UCA2020 but are now repurposing those dollars to the new virtual event and other UCA campaigns. We will never forget you.
- Vendors who stepped up to contribute services or products and those who are working diligently to meet unmet needs, including PPE.
- The enthusiasm we are experiencing from members and speakers for our first virtual, on-demand convention.



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Without space barriers, we are excited to offer even more CME, CUCMP credit, education, and fun.

- An anonymous donor who is doubling the College of Urgent Care Medicine’s (CUCM) contribution to the *My Very Own Blanket* charity, which they had intended to support at UCA2020’s live convention. Twice the number of blankets will now be provided to vulnerable children who find themselves *overwhelmed* as they enter the uncertainty of life as a foster child.
- The bridges being built between UCA and other organizations. UCA, CUCM, and the American College of Emergency Physicians released their first-ever collaborative statement on triage and ED transfers for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients. Similarly, the American Academy of Family Physicians has also generously shared resources and welcomed UCA’s collaboration.
- The tremendous support we are feeling from our Boards, Committees and members who have reached out to offer assistance. While we are seeking ways to lift up our industry, they are letting us know we are not in this alone.
- The resiliency of our members as they repurpose downtime to implement new services, including telemedicine, ramp up training, innovate marketing techniques, and redeploy resources.

It is a tough time in urgent care, but we are confident patients will return to your centers with a renewed appreciation for the front liners in this crisis. UCA will not cease to relentlessly advocate on behalf of our healthcare heroes. We intend to be there for you and deliver grateful patients to your door. Above all, we hope you, your family, and your colleagues are healthy and safe.

Together, we are #UrgentCareStrong.

With gratitude,
Team UCA ■