

Certification and Celebration

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ, MA

When I did this CEO job the first time, I was part of the group that created UCA's Certified Urgent Care (CUC) program. By the time I took this job the second time in 2020, only 20% of urgent cares had gotten the designation, so I wanted to kill it.

That data indicated there isn't a strong need or demand for the CUC designation, so it seemed like killing the program was the right thing to do. Boy, am I glad we didn't—but for a very surprising reason.

As I've mentioned in past columns, lots of people have been hard at work to figure out where our legislative and advocacy priorities should be. Urgent care is a heterogeneous group, and it's hard to imagine a way to represent you all. We also came to understand that we had to focus on a very few things to make true progress. You can see what's hard about this—choosing the right few things for such a diverse group.

As we stepped further and further back to find the right commonalities, it smacked us in the face (again) that we have to have a foundational definition of urgent care. Otherwise, when we go and advocate for this or that change in legislation or regulations or coding, *who does that change apply to?* Who is eligible for that new code or rate? We have to be able to answer that question.

As chance (or amazing foresight of our 2008–2009 Board of Directors) would have it, we already have the answer to that question. The changes should apply to Certified Urgent Cares—because those centers are the only ones that we can definitively say meet the baseline criteria for being an urgent care.

Wait a minute! Don't we have thousands of wonderful member centers that aren't Certified? Yes, we do. Can UCA definitively say that every one of those centers meet the baseline criteria? No, we cannot...so it's impossible for us to advocate that every one of those centers should (for example) get paid more for offering a broad scope of services because they

have POC testing and x-ray capabilities (because we don't know if they do).

We do know that about every single Certified Urgent Care, however.

Please consider this your official notice that in the coming years it's going to be important for your centers to be Certified. If not by UCA, by someone. Otherwise our industry is just too much of a mishmash for the powers that be to get comfortable with drafting legislation and rules for. That's not how they work.

We haven't pushed hard on this before because we didn't want it to seem self-serving, but it's time for us to do it now because it is so very "you-serving." We've made it simple to apply; just email quality@ucaoa.org and we'll walk you through it. And we are *dropping the price for members*—from \$540 to \$360 per location, which covers 3 years of CUC status. If you are a fully fledged urgent care, the criteria are EASY to meet and the process is EASY to do.

I know you are busy right now, and tired, but *I urge you to put this on your list for 2022 because it's going to be very important* as our advocacy work progresses.

Speaking of celebrating, I want to make sure that the other thing on your list is the Urgent Care Foundation events at UCA's Annual Convention.

The Celebration dinner recognizes and celebrates the best among us, and we have a lot of celebrating to do since we haven't gotten to have this event since 2019. It also raises funds for original research and all the advocacy work I've been talking about. The dinner does sell out, so if you miss getting dinner tickets, don't miss getting tickets to the After Party at the Omnia club at Caesars. It's an event in itself and will be fabulous. It's a party for a cause...and *you are the cause*. See you there. ■



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For more information on the Urgent Care Association's Certified Urgent Care (CUC) program, visit <https://www.ucaoa.org/Quality-Programs/Certification>.