

A Bittersweet Introduction

■ MAX LEBOW, MD, MPH



Armando Samaniego

This month's column is not supposed to be written by me. This month's column should have been written by Dr. Armando Samaniego, who became UCA's President at our Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, just a few months ago. Tragically, Armando passed away unexpectedly on May 21. He

was an esteemed colleague, mentor, and friend to all who knew him, and I am honored to have worked alongside him on the UCA Board of Directors.

Armando and I were close because of our work on the Board, but also because we had a shared dedication and commitment to family. His face, like mine, would light up when we talked together about our children, their accomplishments, and the vital role that family played in our lives. In addition to family and the Board, Armando was committed to his patients, and to the principles of quality medical care and healthcare equity. He was a moral compass to me and to those with whom he worked.

Armando's enthusiasm and dedication to excellence in medical care and practice were contagious. It was only through his support and encouragement that I ran for President-Elect, and it is because of his confidence in me that I now (albeit a year prematurely) have become UCA President. I will always be grateful to him for sharing his wisdom on the Board. Because he was especially generous with his time with new members of the Board, his inspiration and ideas will live on for many years to come. We will update you on plans for a tribute to his legacy. For now, suffice to say that Armando and his commitment to the advancement and long-term success of urgent care will not be forgotten.

As I enter my year as President of the Urgent Care Association, I have set certain goals which I would like to share. First, I want to see an increase in UCA membership. Greater numbers mean a stronger voice for UCA in promoting the interests of urgent

care medicine and the urgent care industry to stakeholders, legislators, and decision-makers.

Equally important, I wish to increase the *involvement* of our membership with the organization. UCA has committees and sections for almost any interest group within urgent care.

That involvement includes coming to the Convention. If you were with us in Las Vegas in April, you know what a powerful gathering that was. You could literally feel the energy of the future of our industry in the vibe of the people in the hallways, in the classrooms, on the stages and in the celebrations. One of the speakers said that it felt like we were beginning all over again—and I believe the best is yet to come for urgent care.

My next goal is to increase the value and benefits of UCA and CUMC membership—more on this in a future column.

I am also firmly committed to healthcare equity and inclusion. Armando helped form the Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to ensure those ideals would be an active and vital part of our organization's mission.

Do not take my optimism to mean we are not facing challenges. The latest UCA benchmarking survey shows that staffing issues are difficult for many practices, but this is a symptom of steady demand. We have some of the most creative, entrepreneurial, determined people working in our industry. We believe in quality of care and in patient experience. Through hard work and dedication, our urgent care centers will become an even more important part of the healthcare delivery system in each of our communities.

I hope that if you or your organization is not yet a member you will join us this month. UCA continues to improve its resources and benefits for members, and works hard on behalf of every one of you—member or not—toward long-term goals that will ensure the long-term success of urgent care. We will get there faster if our membership is greater and more representative. I invite you to join us and be part of the group ensuring our future. And I look forward to serving you in the coming year. ■



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