

# This is Our Time

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ, MA

Right now it's easy to look around your centers, and your communities, and the nation and say *Here we go again...* The combination of influenza and RSV and COVID is making it feel a lot like 2021 with all of our challenges playing on repeat—except that they feel worse now because of staffing shortages and rising costs and unsympathetic insurance companies still sitting on payment rates despite 2 years of evidence that Urgent Care must be invested in and protected (not to mention the 2 decades prior).

These feelings are completely normal, and they are also completely wrong.

Urgent Care is not where it was in 2019, 2020, 2021, or even 2022. Through all of the adversity of the past 3 years, whether you've noticed it or not, you have evolved. You are still standing, still open, and the only way that's still true is if you and your teams have learned new skills in determination, creativity, perseverance, and resilience.

In the September 2021 issue I wrote this column about the poem *Invictus*. *Invictus* is about what it looks like to be a hero—"My head is bloody, but unbowed." I think you can all relate to that image because you see it every day in the mirror. To quote myself: "Heroes don't just show up. They show up over and over." That kind of showing up leaves a mark on a person, forever. You have been a part of something tremendously hard, but you have gotten up one more time than you have fallen down, and that changes you.

The things that used to trouble us in our centers pre-pandemic can seem so minor now. Remember when 37 patients a day seemed like a really full day? You are stronger than that now. Remember when your supplies arrived a day late because your delivery driver got a flat tire? You are better prepared than that now. It might be a meaningful exercise to discuss this with your teams and discover just how different they are now than a few "short" years ago.

The ending of one year and the beginning of another, though they are artificial endings and beginnings, do lead

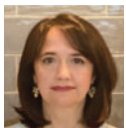
*"It seems the world would rather we stay under the radar and do our thing quietly and not make a fuss—but we know better now."*

our minds to contemplating the future. As we do that, what I want all of us to recognize is that this year is different. This year we are stronger. This year we have figured out that we can live through all kinds of things we couldn't have imagined we'd be able to live through. This year we know we can handle things that we thought were too tough before. This year is the beginning of something new.

This is the year that we are truly ready to move from *reactive* to *proactive*. Our organizations are tough enough, our people have expanded their expertise and agility, and we are finally beginning to understand what speaking with one voice can sound like. Because of the past 3 years, Urgent Care has a new reputation that's anything *but* "flying under the radar" and we are ready to take that reputation out for an unabashed spin and see what it can do. I think we are all sick and tired of watching Urgent Care get marginalized.

The theme for The Urgent Care Convention this year (March 31–April 5 in Las Vegas) is "Driving Change." We've all tried really, really hard to play nice and be good and keep believing that change would come our way if we continued to do those things, but that isn't working like it should. It seems the world would rather we stay under the radar and do our thing quietly and not make a fuss—but we know better now. We must move from "hoping to change" to Driving Change, and that's what I hope we all intend to do. We are ready for it now.

I'll end by returning to my constant theme—we are stronger together. I can't seem to get away from this concept because I'm still so excited to see what we can do if our entire industry actually does come together. Go back and read the column headline. It doesn't say, "This is Your Time," it says "This is *Our* Time." Your team is ready to go into a new battle, but wouldn't you rather go in with an entire army? ■



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