

## Free Advice

■ Lou Ellen Horwitz, MA

Members of the Urgent Care Association (UCA) get a lot of “free” stuff—resources, checklists, podcasts, job searches, magazines, webinars, templates, plans, and so on. But this year at the Urgent Care Convention we are going one better (two, actually). I’m talking about our new “Ask a Consultant” sessions and our Quality Programs Center, both of which essentially provide the space for free consulting (*yes, free*).

The Ask a Consultant sessions feature top, vetted consultants who are established experts across many areas of Urgent Care operations from startup to marketing to contracting, coding, and more. These individuals are donating their time and expertise to help Urgent Care Convention attendees improve and advance their operations—part of UCA’s core purpose! Attendees will sign up for one-on-one sessions to meet with the consultant of their choice to receive live, customized input on their current challenges. We are thrilled to be able to offer this unique opportunity to Convention attendees.

The Quality Programs Center features best practices with our highly experienced Accreditation surveyors, each of whom have many years of experience working in Urgent Care operations. These experts operate accredited Urgent Care centers all day, every day—and they can give you many examples of how to do things well. If you have challenges establishing or maintaining high quality in your centers, they can help you overcome the challenges and demystify the accreditation process so you can join their ranks. We are thankful to them for donating their time, expertise and experience to Convention attendees for the betterment of all Urgent Care.

To me, just these two opportunities make the Convention worth the trip. The last exciting event I’ll highlight is the Urgent Care Foundation Celebration. This year’s party is going to be something really special! And aside from

having a good time, we are going to raise money for two critical needs in our industry: research and increased awareness.

Research is important for two reasons. First, original clinical research is a requirement for becoming a recognized specialty—a top goal for the College of Urgent Care Medicine. Second, the Urgent Care industry needs more studies about the impact we have on emergency department visits and the cost savings we provide to patients. The majority of industry studies to date have been done by outsiders with their own interests at heart, so we need our own independent research.

Raising awareness is important too. Not because patients still need educating, but because all our other stakeholders do! From Congress to other regulatory bodies to commercial payers, our impact is still not fully understood or recognized. A nationwide public relations campaign is needed, and together we can raise the funds to launch one next year. Even if you can’t come to the Celebration, I encourage you to donate to the foundation to support this important work.

The last thing I want to touch on is the opening of UCA’s search for a new CEO. We announced this in February and the search begins this month, so I wanted to take a moment to get personal about why I’m stepping out of the role. Let me be perfectly clear: I love Urgent Care. And I love UCA to the bottom of my heart. I have loved doing this job (both times!). I am not leaving to do something else or because I have concerns about our future. On the contrary, I have never been more optimistic about where we are headed and am so excited about the engagement we have from all of you.

I came back to UCA as CEO to use my skills and experience to get us through the pandemic, and to reinvent ourselves to meet whatever the post-pandemic future would become. As we look toward the execution of UCA’s current Strategic Plan, we will need a CEO with different skills and talents. I am honored to work with the Board to find that wonderful, amazing person.

In the meantime, I’ll stay right here and continue to do my best to serve. See you soon in Las Vegas. ■



Lou Ellen Horwitz, MA is the chief executive officer of the Urgent Care Association.