

# Strategic Planning

■ Lou Ellen Horwitz, MA

I want to mention our recent Advocacy victory: getting a mention of Urgent Care into the Centers For Medicare & Medicaid Services publication of the 2025 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule. If you want more details on why this is a big deal, you can listen to the 2 interviews I did with Eric Zimmerman (our lobbyist team leader) on the Urgent Care Leadership Podcast (found anywhere you get your podcasts).

I want to give a monumental shout-out to the many Urgent Care Association (UCA) members who spent hours in Congressional conversations to help achieve this milestone. More work needs to be done to get to the finish line, but it's great to get points on the board.

Also, as an update from my June column asking why so few were responding to our call for fundraising to support these efforts, not many more people or organizations have stepped up in response. The Board knows that it's important to the long-term success of Urgent Care and that it's our main job at UCA, so we will find a way to do it for you. Please keep renewing your membership and coming to Convention – it's all critical activity that contributes to our ability to accomplish payment reform goals for Urgent Care.

In August, the UCA team gathered to lay out our strategic plan for the next couple of years.

We continue to look to our core purpose of ensuring long-term success and advancement for Urgent Care as our starting point for all planning. Every year, we consider what that core purpose means to our members for the next 12-18 months and structure our planning around those needs.

First, we look at advancement: What do members need from UCA (and/or the College of Urgent Care Medicine [CUCM] and the Urgent Care Foundation [UCF] and Chapters)? We are focusing on three areas:

empowering best practices in operations; reversing acuity degradation (with CUCM); and establishing Urgent Care as a recognized specialty for physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners (also with CUCM). These involve working with partners to curate and create improved content, upgrading content access, collaboratively building criteria for clinician recognition programs, and supporting original research (with UCF) to drive advancement forward.

Next, we look at long-term success: What must we be doing now to ensure that Urgent Care is thriving in the future? We are focusing on four areas: payment reform; staffing challenges; elevating the profile of Urgent Care quality; and visit growth. We've never taken on visit growth before, so we are looking forward to working with everyone to mount (2025) and launch (2026) a national campaign to the public on using Urgent Care. Fundraising through UCF is critical. For improving staffing challenges, we are crafting a campaign to target healthcare professionals about working in Urgent Care, continuing our state-based advocacy so medical assistants can be trained to take X-rays, and working with partners to evolve the physician/physician-assistant supervisory ratio rules. For elevating the profile of Urgent Care quality, we are excited about where we are taking this and will share very soon.

There have been 2 main takeaways for me during our strategic planning. The first being that we have a great team. They are so dedicated to the success of members and have kept raising the bar with the skills and humility and connectedness to both lead and follow through. They are focused on our core purpose and how the work of UCA, CUCM and UCF and our Chapters support our shared goals: leveraging each entity where it can do the most good the fastest.

The second is how longitudinally we are able to work now that we are able to take on larger projects for you that have long-term impacts. Aligning the work of UCA, CUCM, and UCF has been the result of the staff and many volunteer leaders digging deeply into what we really want to accomplish. The future looks bright! ■



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