

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

■ Lou Ellen Horwitz, MA

I hope you have had a wonderful holiday season and that your centers are full of patients...but also that you and your colleagues have managed to stay healthy! For the Urgent Care Association (UCA), the College of Urgent Care Medicine (CUCM), the Urgent Care College of Physicians (UCCOP), and the Urgent Care Foundation (UCF), Q1 is Urgent Care Convention ramp-up time, leading toward our favorite time of year when we all get to gather and see each other in person. There's nothing like those few days together.

This year from May 3-6 we are in Dallas, Texas, at the absolutely gorgeous Hilton Anatole. The Anatole is a marvelous place full of original artwork and enormous sculptures and tree-filled spaces—and is easy to get to from either of Dallas's 2 airports. The meeting and exhibit hall areas are close to the guestrooms so there are no long walks from point A to point B, and everything is on one floor. There are also lots of spaces to gather informally with friends or customers and just hang out together after hours or during breaks. The health club, pools, and spa on the property are wonderful, so bring your family because there's plenty for them to do while you are in sessions. It's going to be a great place to connect and talk about where we are all taking Urgent Care in the future.

In addition to the great location, there is a lot happening during the Convention! And as with every year, we've added and upgraded to make sure you have a great learning and networking experience. So, what's *new*?

Let's talk about content first. We have 3 "journeys" in operations advancement: growth & investment, staffing, and leadership. We have 2 journeys in clinical advancement: high acuity/high performance, and evolving practice—with 25 hours of CME available! You can choose 1

journey or mix and match to fit your unique role. We're also bringing back the popular Quality workshop.

Next, let's talk about fun. One of our keynote speakers is Brad Nieder, MD, a healthcare humorist who will give us all those deep healthy laughs we need to keep doing what we do. At the Foundation Celebration, the band Diamond West will be performing. Between the band and the action on the dance floor, it will be a fantastic fundraising night! We'll also have a new UC Café to hang out in and talk shop outside the classrooms.

Of course, we will have an amazing Solutions Expo hall full of all of the solutions vendors that you don't have time to talk to during your regular day. You will have time to slow down, ask the questions you need to ask and learn about solutions you didn't know existed. There will be time for 1:1 meetings, spaces for live demos, and there's even going to be a scavenger hunt. If you are exhibiting, we have created a new package so you can experience aspects of the Convention outside of the exhibit hall!

As great as all of that is going to be, the real reason I'm comfortable calling the Urgent Care Convention the "most wonderful time of the year" is because of the people who come to it. Urgent Care people are special, and being part of that group of hundreds and hundreds of Urgent Care people is a wonderful experience that you owe to yourself. Friendships of a lifetime begin there. It is refreshing and reinvigorating, problems get solved, and barriers fall down while momentum is built. The return on investment for yourself and your company or practice is immeasurably large – immediately and into the future.

It's also the place where all the new things are unveiled by vendors and by UCA. This year will be no different (hint, hint) so don't miss it. It's also UCA's 20th year, so that says something pretty cool about Urgent Care and about our association. Register early and invite your friends (and your competitors...tomorrow they could be your collaborators)! Can't wait to see you all there and celebrate Urgent Care's ongoing evolution together. ■



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