

The Search

■ Lou Ellen Horwitz, MA

As many of you know, early last year we announced my plans to retire as CEO of the Urgent Care Association (UCA). While that's still happening, I wanted to share why filling the role is taking such a long time.

Hiring the CEO is one of the most important responsibilities of your elected Board of Directors, and it's a responsibility they each take very seriously. They are committed to getting the best leader possible to take UCA and our affiliate entities into the future with a strong vision for the characteristics of that individual.

To align on that vision the Board spent a lot of time thinking about the strategic plans we have mapped out for the next several years, where the field of Urgent Care is going, what our shared challenges are, and how the CEO role needs to evolve to address all of those complex needs and constituents.

Chief Executive Officer of an association is a job that requires a special combination of experience and skills. First, leading UCA at this point in our evolution requires some Urgent Care experience. I didn't have that experience when I was CEO the first time, but we were a much younger field in 2006 with no advocacy efforts underway, so it was a much simpler job. That's no longer the case.

The College of Urgent Care Medicine has done excellent work in defining our clinical scope, but everything about Urgent Care is still evolving. Field experience is essential, especially as we navigate a pivotal moment in Urgent Care reimbursement. After years of effort, we've gotten our first mention in the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule—a significant milestone. While we're hopeful for federal reform in 2026, this is just the beginning of UCA's role in ensuring Urgent Care's long-term success. Commercial payers and Medicaid present even greater challenges, making it crucial for the next CEO to have deep expertise in payer negotiations, the regulatory environment, and advocacy.



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Second, the CEO needs to understand how associations function best. This work is a complex weave of engaging members in efforts that matter to them, connecting stakeholders to information and relationships that improve their situations, creating opportunities that drive straight-line revenue, and building a community that will attract like-minded people to band together around shared work and values.

The "Urgent Care collective" has grown into 5 distinct organizations, and the UCA CEO must also understand and weave together the core purposes, strengths, and priorities of all these organizations. This work requires someone who can commit to the Boards and members of all 5 entities to be deeply familiar with their goals, attentive to their financial stability, and approach strategic initiatives in an integrated way across the field. They must also be able to engage many, many volunteers to accomplish objectives.

Lastly, they must have prior experience as a CEO. UCA has an incredible team and fantastic boards, but we are at critical junctures with so many initiatives that are so important to the field that this is not a role for a first-time CEO. Healthcare by itself is complex, and making progress on the many fronts we are addressing is extremely complex. The ability to lead all of this—in a remote environment—while also building the new relationships that we will need in the years to come...well, that all takes a special combination of experience and skills.

Finally, the new CEO has to embody our organizational values: We Commit, We Collaborate, and We Advance. Together these values are what drive UCA and Urgent Care forward.

We're confident we'll find the right person and will keep you updated on our progress. I just didn't want you to think we'd forgotten about it! All of us are committed to engaging the best leader to achieve our core purpose: ensuring the advancement and long-term success of Urgent Care.

I'll see you all in Dallas (one more time) for the Urgent Care Convention and Foundation Celebration next month! ■