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About the Conference

Business Research Intelligence Network's Urgent Care Centers Congress brings together the operators, medical directors and practice managers who are defining what successful urgent care looks like in 2026. Whether you're launching your first center, competing against hospital systems with massive marketing budgets or implementing AI to keep providers from burning out on documentation, this conference addresses the challenges that keep urgent care leaders up at night.

You'll hear from operators who've figured out how to staff centers when hospitals down the street offer \$25,000 signing bonuses, navigated the economics of startup and expansion and implemented technology that actually improves throughput rather than just adding cost. This isn't a vendor showcase or a theoretical discussion about the future of healthcare—it's two days of real talk about site selection mistakes, payer contract negotiations, competing against misleading ER marketing and adapting to patients who expect Amazon-level convenience from their healthcare.

The Urgent Care Centers Congress is where you'll find the operators willing to share what their revenue cycle actually looks like, how they're managing Gen Z patient expectations and which investments paid off versus which they regret. If you're looking for honest conversations about urgent care economics, proven strategies from peers in the trenches and actionable solutions you can implement next week, this is your conference.

Agenda

Day One – Monday, October 26, 2026

7:15am – 8:00am

Conference Registration & Networking Breakfast

8:00am – 8:10am

Chairperson's Opening Remarks

8:10am – 8:50am

Choosing the right point-of-care laboratory platform: an operator's playbook for Urgent Care

Point-of-care diagnostics are rapidly transforming urgent care operations. Advances in technology have expanded the range of testing options available to operators while simultaneously raising patient expectations for rapid answers and immediate treatment decisions. As a result, selecting the right laboratory platform has become increasingly complex. Urgent care leaders must balance workflow efficiency, staffing realities, reimbursement variability, quality oversight, regulatory requirements, clinical utility, and the total cost of ownership when evaluating diagnostic solutions.

This session provides urgent care leaders with a practical framework for evaluating and implementing POC laboratory platforms in real-world urgent care environments. Using operational case studies and current market examples, participants will learn how to align diagnostic strategies with patient volumes, staffing models, stewardship goals, and financial sustainability.

The discussion will move beyond “more testing is better” and focus on selecting the right test, on the right platform, for the right clinical setting.

Christopher Chao, MD

Medical Director

Urgent Care, WakeMed Health and Hospital

Past President, College of Urgent Care Medicine

8:50am – 9:30am

Syndrome Testing in Urgent Care - Meaningful Results at the Point of Care

In today's fast-paced healthcare environment, urgent care centers must deliver rapid, accurate diagnoses to optimize patient outcomes and improve provider efficiency. Today we will update and explore innovations in syndrome testing designed specifically for the urgent care setting. This session will highlight how emerging technologies amplify diagnostic accuracy, streamline workflows, and support timely clinical decisions. Physicians and medical providers will gain insights into practical applications that will not only enhance patient care but also strengthen the overall value of urgent care in the broader healthcare ecosystem.

Paul Nanda, MD, FCUCM

Chief Medical Officer

TGH Urgent Care powered by Fast Track

9:30am – 10:00am

Networking & Refreshments Break

10:00am – 10:40am

When Five Minutes Means Three Hours: Competing Against Hospital ER Marketing

Hospital ERs are advertising "5-minute wait times" and claiming to be "better than urgent care" through clever metric manipulation and massive marketing budgets. This session examines the competitive threat from hospital-backed urgent care and ER marketing including how they use provider-in-triage models to game wait time metrics, why their facility fees make them expensive despite marketing promises and strategies for educating patients about the urgent care value proposition. You'll learn how to respond to aggressive hospital marketing, communicate your actual speed and cost advantages and defend your market position.

- Understanding hospital ER wait time metrics vs. actual patient experience
- Marketing messages that resonate: total visit time, cost transparency, convenience
- Data sources for countering misleading hospital claims (CMS reporting)
- Partnership opportunities vs. competitive positioning with hospital systems

Leah Dodyk

Regional Director of Operations

AFC Urgent Care, Connecticut

10:40am – 11:20am

The Generational Flip: Understanding Your Changing Patient Demographics

Patient demographics in urgent care are shifting dramatically with Gen Z and Millennials over-indexing on visits while Baby Boomers under-utilize despite greater medical needs. This session examines what's driving generational differences in urgent care utilization and what it means for operations. You'll explore why younger patients prefer urgent care over primary care, how digital natives expect to interact with healthcare and operational changes that better serve different age cohorts. The discussion includes technology adoption, communication preferences and service design for diverse generational expectations.

Alan Ayers

President

Urgent Care Consultants

11:20am – 11:50am

Aptitude Session

Qiang (Jackson) Gong, Ph.D.

COO

Aptitude Medical Systems, Inc.

11:50am – 12:30pm

More Staff Won't Solve Your LWBS: Frontline Strategies to Reduce Patient Walkouts

We hear a lot about door-to-doc times — but the patient experience begins at the front door, not when the provider walks in the exam room. More staff isn't always the answer — when labor is the largest controllable expense and call-outs are unpredictable, urgent care operations leaders frequently have to protect LWBS with the team they have, not the team they wish they

had. This session reframes LWBS reduction as both prevention and response: designing the patient experience intentionally so escalation rarely starts, and recognizing and de-escalating it when it does. Attendees will learn the behavioral cues that predict a walkout, and how small intentional choices — early rooming, staff friendliness and visibility, touchpoint frequency — make staying easier than leaving. The session also covers scripting and huddles that equip frontline teams to manage perception during the highest-pressure moments. Grounded in operational experience across a large urgent care and primary care network, this session offers concrete language and practical tools that can be applied on the next shift — even on short-staffed days.

Cynthia Stevens, FNP, MBA
Vice President of Operations
FastPace Health

12:30pm – 1:30pm
Luncheon

1:30pm – 2:15pm

Radical Empathy: Shining Bright in the Places That Harden Most

In healthcare, patients often encounter us during moments of fear, pain, uncertainty, or vulnerability, and in those moments, empathy becomes part of the care itself. In this session, registered nurse and healthcare leader Casey Micheil reframes radical empathy not as a soft skill, but as both a powerful patient experience tool and an actionable leadership framework. Drawing from leadership experience in a high-volume academic urgent care center, Casey shares real-world stories and evidence-informed strategies that demonstrate how empathy can strengthen trust, improve team culture, reduce emotional harm, and shape the way patients experience care. Participants will leave with practical tools to operationalize empathy across frontline interactions, leadership practices, and system-level workflows, restoring humanity to the moments that matter most.

Casey Micheil, BSN, RN, CNML
Practice Manager, Urgent Care
UCI Health

2:15pm – 3:15pm

Panel: Independent vs. Hospital-Affiliated vs. Corporate—Different Models, Different Challenges

Independent operators, hospital-affiliated urgent care centers and corporate chains face fundamentally different challenges and opportunities. This panel brings together leaders to discuss competitive advantages, operational constraints, capital access, regulatory pressures and strategic positioning. Panelists will share honest perspectives on what works in their model, what they envy about other models and where they see the urgent care market heading. The conversation addresses consolidation trends, partnership opportunities and whether independent operators can remain viable long-term.

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President

Urgent Care Consultants

3:15pm – 3:45pm

Networking & Refreshments Break

3:45pm – 4:30pm

Revenue Cycle Optimization: Getting Paid for the Care You Provide

Many urgent care centers provide excellent clinical care but leave money on the table through poor revenue cycle management. This session examines common revenue cycle problems in urgent care including undercoding, incomplete documentation, claim denials, patient collections and payer contract negotiations. You'll learn about coding optimization, documentation improvement, denial management processes and technology tools that improve collections. The speaker shares specific metrics to track, benchmarks for performance and interventions that move revenue cycle effectiveness.

Connor Verbruggen MS, MBA, PA-C

Associate Division Head

Trinity Health-IHA Urgent Care

4:30pm – 5:15pm

Operational Efficiency: Throughput Without Burning Out Your Team

Higher patient volume only improves profitability if you can maintain reasonable throughput without excessive staffing costs or provider burnout. This session explores workflow optimization, staffing models, technology tools and process improvements that enable efficient operations. You'll learn about patient flow design, triage protocols, task delegation, provider productivity benchmarks and identifying bottlenecks. The discussion includes real examples of centers that improved throughput sustainably versus those that pushed too hard and created turnover problems.

- Workflow analysis tools for identifying bottlenecks and inefficiencies
- Staffing ratios and productivity benchmarks for different volume levels

- Technology investments that genuinely improve throughput vs. expensive distractions
- Provider scheduling models that balance efficiency with sustainable workloads

David Vaynman
 Director of Operations
MetroMed Urgent Care

5:15pm
End of Day One

Day Two – Tuesday, October 27, 2026

7:15am – 8:00am
Networking Breakfast

8:00am – 8:15am
Chairperson's Remarks

8:15am – 9:00am
Practicing Without Fear: Understanding the Standard of Care & Avoiding Legal Pitfalls in Urgent Care

Many nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and other mid-level providers practice under a constant fear of litigation, board complaints, or losing their license. This session will break down what the “standard of care” actually means in real-world urgent care practice and separate legal myths from reality. Attendees will gain a clearer understanding of documentation, clinical judgment, informed decision-making, and common liability pitfalls seen in urgent care settings. The presentation will also address how fear-based medicine can negatively impact both providers and patient care. Through practical examples and discussion, providers will learn how to protect themselves professionally while still practicing confidently and efficiently. This session is designed to empower clinicians with knowledge, reduce unnecessary anxiety, and help them approach patient care with greater clarity and confidence. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies to navigate high-risk situations without practicing defensively or out of fear.

Robert Gluckman, Esq.
 Chief Executive Officer
Treasure Coast Psychiatry

9:00am – 9:45am gl
Managing Occupational Health Programs: Beyond Workers' Comp

Occupational health services provide stable revenue and employer relationships but require different operational approaches than walk-in urgent care. This session examines how to build and manage occupational health programs including employer contracting, DOT exams, drug screening, workers' compensation care and return-to-work coordination. You'll learn about service offerings that employers actually want, pricing strategies, compliance requirements and

integrating occupational health with urgent care operations. The discussion covers marketing to employers, managing workers' comp claims and avoiding common occupational health pitfalls.

- Service line development: which occupational health services to offer
- Employer contracting strategies and pricing models
- Workers' compensation management and payer relationships
- Compliance requirements for DOT exams, drug screening and OSHA services

Chrissy Jones, MBA

Director of Occupational Medicine

CareNow Urgent Care

9:45am – 10:15am

Networking & Refreshments Break

10:15am – 11:00am

Quality and Patient Safety: Building Programs That Prevent Problems

Quality and safety programs in urgent care need to address unique risks including misdiagnosis, inappropriate referrals, patient volume pressures and provider variability. This session examines practical approaches to quality improvement including incident reporting systems, case review processes, provider feedback and continuous improvement initiatives. You'll learn about common quality issues in urgent care, effective chart review methodologies, creating cultures where staff report concerns and measuring quality beyond patient satisfaction scores. The speaker shares examples of quality programs that actually improve care versus compliance exercises that don't change behavior.

Ty Houston, CHC:

Chief Compliance Officer

WellStreet Urgent Care

Cassandra Barnette Donnelly

Regional Medical Officer | Urgent Care Association President -Elect

WellStreet Urgent Care

11:00am – 11:45am

Transforming Radiology Challenges into Opportunities

An overview of how innovative workforce strategies can help urgent care organizations address ongoing radiology staffing shortages while improving operational flexibility and team development. This session explores the implementation of an internal limited licensure pathway designed to expand workforce capabilities, support employee growth, and create more sustainable staffing models within the urgent care setting.

Nichole Esterdahl, MSN, RN

Director OnDemand Operations

OSF OnCall

11:45am – 12:30pm

Technology Stack for Urgent Care: EHR, Patient Engagement and Beyond

Technology decisions fundamentally shape urgent care operations and patient experience but the vendor landscape is crowded with promises that don't always deliver. This session provides guidance on selecting and optimizing technology platforms including EHR systems designed for urgent care workflows, patient engagement tools, online scheduling, telemedicine integration and data analytics. You'll learn about must-have capabilities versus nice-to-have features, integration requirements, total cost of ownership and realistic expectations for technology ROI.

- EHR evaluation criteria specific to urgent care workflows
- Patient engagement platforms: online scheduling, check-in, communication
- Telemedicine integration for extended hours or overflow capacity
- Data analytics tools that provide actionable operational insights

Jon Medin

Director of Growth & Marketing

Mercy Urgent Care

12:30pm

Conference Concludes

WORKSHOP (Optional)

12:45pm – 2:45pm

Operational Efficiency: Throughput Is Not the Same as Structural Health

Urgent care centers are under increasing pressure to improve throughput while operating with lean staffing models, rising patient expectations, and rapidly evolving technology. However, operational efficiency without structural stability often leads to burnout, workflow fragmentation, communication breakdowns, hidden revenue leakage, and disruptions in continuity of care.

This workshop explores the difference between a system that is simply functioning versus one that is structurally healthy and built to sustain growth over time. Attendees will learn how workflow design, staffing structures, communication patterns, technology decisions, AI integration, and continuity-focused operational architecture impact throughput, team sustainability, patient experience, and long-term operational performance.

The session will also explore what the future of urgent care may look like as healthcare moves toward greater automation, intelligent workflows, AI-assisted operations, and continuity-centered system design heading into 2027 and beyond.

Topics will include:

- Workflow bottlenecks and operational friction
- Throughput versus operational sustainability
- Burnout, staffing strain, and hidden compensation behaviors

- Technology and AI tools that support versus complicate operations
- Improving continuity, communication, patient flow, and revenue integrity
- Building operational systems designed for the future of healthcare

Stephanie Hartline

Healthcare Systems Architect and Executive Advisor

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