

# CEO NEWS & VIEWS



Dear Colleagues:

I have had a great couple of weeks! I'm still basking in our #1 UHC ranking for quality and safety, and you should know I have received so many great comments and notes and congratulatory calls from colleagues and friends around the country. I accept them all on *our* behalf. It was a great way to start the fall. Stay tuned for more news about how we will celebrate internally!

I thought this might be a good time to provide you with a brief update on the status of our partnership with Poudre Valley Health System. I have spent more hours with Poudre Valley CEO Rulon Stacey than I have with my wife the last couple of months (although she hasn't complained...I wonder how I should interpret that?) I continue to be impressed and really amazed at how incredibly positive this journey has been, especially in light of the complex and difficult issues we are dealing with.

Several weeks ago, we got several members of our respective medical leadership together for dinner. There's a lot of good chemistry between our organizations and I think we all left that dinner feeling we had a better appreciation for each other's cultures. While I want to reiterate that we made this deal for strategic reasons, the reality is that it will make good sense to explore the opportunities and synergies that might exist among our departments in some key areas. Those talks have just begun and we'll update you if there's news to share.

Currently, we are spending the bulk of our time and energy on completing the Definitive Agreement, which will essentially outline how we will operate as a system. As you can imagine, there are a million details to discuss, consider and decide upon, but I feel as if things are moving along well enough that we can probably get this completed by January, barring any unforeseen issues. Our Board of Directors has been incredibly supportive, and we all continue to feel like this is the right thing to be doing at this time.

**What about me?** It is fine and dandy for me to sit in the CEO's office writing about how things are moving along nicely, but I can imagine you are also wondering how all of this will affect you. Some of you may be feeling some unease about the future and that's not only completely understandable, it's natural.

There will be some changes and transitions that we will all go through in the coming months. We are working on a new name for our system (although we will maintain "University of Colorado Hospital"). There's also interest from other hospitals in Denver and throughout Colorado, as well as some in Nebraska and Wyoming, about joining our system.

Bill Bridges, whom I've known for decades and is considered the guru on change and transition, says that "it isn't the changes that do you in, it's the transitions." He clarifies by explaining change is transitional, while transition is the process people go through as they come to terms with new situations. I have been in this business a whole lot of years, and if there is one piece of advice I want to give all of you (and remind myself of, too!), it would be to embrace the change; be open to it; be

flexible. We did not get to #1 among academic medical centers by being timid, shy and risk-averse. You have already lived through more change the last several years than most hospitals experience in their lifetimes (Epic, anyone?).

Let me also remind you that this is a partnership based on strengthening our strategic position, not necessarily on achieving economic savings. We would be remiss as stewards of this hospital if we didn't look for economic synergies. But given that our institutions are 70 miles apart, there will likely be a limited number of areas where we can realize any savings.

Meanwhile, I encourage all of you to keep doing what you do best: working on the daily needs of our patients. Continue to be the bold workforce you have proven yourselves to be over and over. That said, I am more than willing to attend any staff meeting if anyone wants more details about our process or progress.

**Who's Rockin' the Joint?** Hopefully, not us! As you probably know, we are anxiously awaiting our visit from the Joint Commission. Kristin Stocker has told us to expect a visit between now and December 5<sup>th</sup> (although we know the visit will not occur the week of October 10<sup>th</sup> or Thanksgiving week).

I want to encourage you to review our processes against Joint Commission and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services standards. This accreditation is important for many reasons, not the least of which is that it allows us to treat Medicare, Medicaid and other patients under managed care contracts. As nerve-wracking as these visits are, I think they serve as good, external assessments of how we provide high-quality, safe care. Remember, the survey is supposed to be supportive and educational for the organization. No single answer to a surveyor question or one person's responses will make or break a survey. Be yourselves and show them the great work you do!

**Happy Anniversary...** We hit a couple of milestones that I want to recognize. Resident Historian Allen Staver reminded us that last Saturday marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the University of Colorado Hospital Authority. We've come a long way! Twenty years ago, there was no Critical Care Tower (and no Anschutz Medical Campus) – the assets that CU transferred to UCH consisted of the 8-story hospital building constructed in 1964 and the equipment and supplies that were there on October 1. That was where all inpatient and outpatient care was provided (there wasn't any off-campus clinics). While those hard assets were somewhat rusty and aged, UCH also received an asset of impressive value – the employees and faculty who were at the hospital and who rolled up their sleeves and worked hard to begin the long road of many successes. I also have to pay tribute to my predecessor, Dennis Brimhall who helped make all this possible. We still have 250 employees who were with us on October 1, 1991. Congratulations to all of them, and all of us. Our faculty and staff are still our most valuable resource.

And, I would be remiss if I did not give a huge shout-out to the *UCH Insider*, which will publish its 100<sup>th</sup> issue October 12<sup>th</sup>. One of my goals upon arriving at UCH nearly six years ago was to create open, transparent communication. Nothing could fit the bill better than the *Insider*. The *Insider* gives smart people the information tools they need to navigate their way through a challenging career in a challenging business. The fact that it abides by high journalistic standards is very unusual for an internal publication, and makes me very proud to have it as our "local" newspaper. On behalf of the entire UCH family, I want to thank Bill Sonn and Tyler Smith for their passionate, creative communication vehicle.

Have a good week,

Bruce

Your feedback is important, so if there's something on your mind, write to me at [talktome@uch.edu](mailto:talktome@uch.edu)