

2023
AMERICAN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
**LEADERSHIP
SUMMIT**

SPECIAL REPORT

THE BUZZ

Takeaways from the
2023 AHA Leadership Summit



Rick Pollack, president and CEO of the American Hospital Association, addresses the Summit attendees.

How to plan, execute and accelerate health care's future dominated the discussion in Seattle, as hospital and health system leaders, retail care providers, innovators and entrepreneurs came together to assess what's next for the field. From building a future-ready workforce to delivering a digital experience to beat patient expectations, here's what had attendees buzzing.

| **WORKFORCE** | **Building the future-ready workforce**

To say that hospitals and health systems face severe workforce challenges is an understatement. "There are not and will not be enough people to do the work," Kaveh Safavi, senior managing director at Accenture, told health care executives at a session he co-led on how to build resilient, high-performing teams.

The good news is that through strategic use of technology and optimizing how each health care professional is deployed, providers can close much of the projected workforce shortfall. Nevertheless, that will take considerable work, and leaders will need to focus on developing additional innovative solutions to meet the nation's health care needs as our population ages rapidly. Speakers shared these insights:

1. EMBRACE THE CHALLENGE | The math isn't good. We have a profound supply-and-demand mismatch in the health care workforce

going forward. The number of Americans who will turn 60 between now and 2030 will grow by 48%, Safavi said. People older than 60 consume three to five times the health care services of those 60 and younger. During the same time, the number of people who work to support people older than 60 will shrink by 17%, resulting in a nonlinear boost in worker demand vs. supply.

Takeaway: There is power in knowledge, and leaders have more direct and indirect control of their futures than they may realize, said Amy Webb, futurist and CEO of the Future Today Institute. Break free of the fear, uncertainty and doubt that grip many leaders. Stay focused on transforming your workforce across the spectrum of available options. You'll need many solutions, so avoid prolonged ideation processes and ask, "What if?" often to accelerate incremental gains that can lead to bigger accomplishments, Webb advised.

2. TECH ALONE WON'T CLOSE THE WORKFORCE GAP | Large language models, artificial intelligence (AI) and tools that support virtual nursing will continue to make the clinical workforce and other staff more productive at their most important tasks, but technology won't close the gap in needed efficiency to meet occupational de-



“There are not and will not be enough people to do the work.” says Kaveh Safavi, senior managing director at Accenture

mands. Leaders need to look at individual jobs in health care, decide which functions will be handled by technology and which will be done by humans. This will be a long journey, as leaders reconstruct their work maps. Even considering the gains tech will bring, the field still is on track for a 15% shortage in nurses, Safavi said.

Takeaway: Leaders must remain focused on the net effects of new technologies to ensure that these tools fulfill their potential. And even with all the technology advances in the field, research shows that health care sits in what’s called the medium automation category of jobs. Look for more ways to fully automate rather than simply augment work. And adjust your expectations with generative AI. The technology isn’t completely automated, Webb said. Labor is required to generate human feedback to make these systems work.

3. BE A HEALTH CARE INFLUENCER | Health care executives should be concerned about recent data on how young Americans

today see their career paths, said Webb. One-third of young Americans today want to be social media influencers when they enter the workforce. Another 60% want to be teachers, astronauts, athletes, etc. Health care isn’t even showing up on the list of top desired future careers among young people surveyed.

Takeaway: Health care organizations need to do more outreach to excite students about careers in health care, whether that means being a cancer researcher, nurse, physician or a CEO. Engaging with schools at all levels can help young people become excited about rewarding careers in health care.

| **DISRUPTION** | **Disruptors dish on consumer-centric care**

The notion that health care transformers like Amazon, UnitedHealth Group’s Optum or retail giant Dollar General are here to help hospitals and health systems may leave some skeptical, but that was their message in Seattle. Leaders from the three companies shared insights about the overarching strategies that guide their health care vision. All stressed that they are looking to partner with provider organizations to accelerate change that will make providing high-quality, affordable care faster and more convenient. What can health care leaders learn from these companies?

1. KNOW WHAT DRIVES CONSUMERS | What led Amazon to become the Goliath in online retail was no accident. It stems from principles Amazon founder Jeff Bezos scrawled on a napkin long ago, said Bill Kopitke, general manager and head of health care for Amazon Business. Bezos wrote that if you can give consumers many options, deliver products at a low cost and offer great convenience, it will generate tremendous traffic. Amazon is applying those same principles to its health care operations, Kopitke added. The company sees itself not as a disruptor but as integrating health care into its long-standing success in delivering a consistently convenient



Dollar General's health care mission essentially is to bring health and wellness services closer to home, said Albert Wu, the company's chief medical officer.

consumer experience. Dollar General's health care mission essentially is to bring health and wellness services closer to home, said Albert Wu, the company's chief medical officer. Optum's mission is simple, said Chris Pass, president of market performance partnerships at Optum: "We want the health care system to work better than it does today."

Takeaway: Giving patients the same seamless experience in health care that they have come to expect in retail experiences is important. Strive to make processes like appointment scheduling, obtaining lab results and paying for care mimic the retail world. One reason retailers Dollar General, CVS Health, Walgreens, Walmart and others are investing so heavily in health care is because they

believe they can make the process of obtaining care and staying well easier, Pass said.

2. BRING AFFORDABLE HEALTH AND WELLNESS CARE

CLOSER TO HOME | One of Optum's key focus areas is locally delivered health care. Hospitals are integral to the delivery of care across the continuum, Pass said, but there is a real need to extend health and wellness services beyond the hospital walls. Optum is helping to redesign the health care infrastructure around the country. And with the significant number of rural and other health care facilities closing or consolidating service lines, retailers, payers and others are stepping in to support the essential work that hospitals do, Pass added.

Takeaway: Delivering care remotely, whether through telemedicine, remote patient monitoring or in a patient's home, is a critical area to master, particularly with the nation's aging population.

3. YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO IT ALONE | Opportunities are growing to partner with outside companies that are transforming health care. Kopitke said that Amazon wants to share its insights with health care providers on building a supply chain culture that moves at the speed of business and provides innovative ways to address operational challenges. Developing a deeper understanding of consumers is essential, Dollar General's Wu said, adding that his company closely studies socio-economic data on the diversity of its customers, the types of conditions they have, their shopping behaviors and patterns, how they live and how they like to take care of their families.

Takeaway: If you're looking to work with companies like these, don't underestimate the time it takes to be a good partner, Pass noted. He encouraged leaders to establish partnerships that can drive positive change and enable greater coordination across the care continuum. Wu noted that health care organizations are doing a better job of capturing and analyzing consumer data but that they will need to continue to push hard in this area.



It's the People!

How Starbucks' success can help us reshape modern healthcare staffing

Howard Schultz, the Starbucks CEO who led its growth from a handful of regional shops into a worldwide brand with more than 30,000 locations, once famously said: "We are not in the coffee business serving people. We are in the people business serving coffee."

As America's healthcare leaders descended on NuWest's hometown of Seattle for the 2023 AHA Leadership Summit, over and over again we heard concerned conversations about the healthcare workforce crisis. And, each time a leader said the words "attract, engage or retain," we couldn't help but think about the people-positive Starbucks.

The intentional rearranging of words by Shultz was subtle, but this mantra heralded a monumental shift in the mindset of the Starbucks staff. As the company conquered new challenges, its leaders sowed strategy and culture into every corner of the organization. Starbucks promised employees, "Your entire experience — starting with your application — is designed to be the beginning of an inspirational journey, where you are treated warmly and with transparency, dignity and respect."

And, by treating its staff with five-star care and kindness, Starbucks earned its meteoric growth. More importantly, it enabled Starbucks to fulfill its true mission, people. Fast forward, and that forward-thinking "little" coffee shop now serves more than 60 million people per week.

Innovation, Technology & Digital Transformation

Starbucks famously pioneered operations and technology that are now standards for quick-service restaurants: Faster, more efficient brew machines. High-speed ovens. Online ordering. In-app purchasing and creative space for mobile offices, home-work, or just meeting friends ... to name a few.

But the real secret to Starbucks' success was how it valued and treated people.

As healthcare leaders we can easily fall into FOMO when evaluating the plethora of platforms, tools and technologies promising to rescue modern healthcare. In truth, as Head of Growth at NuWest my job is to leverage innovation to improve workforce strategies for our client organizations, our clinician workforce, and our internal team members. Yet, even though I'm a proud geek, I recognize that we can all learn from Starbucks' iconic approach. Technical innovation is great, but the ultimate force multiplier is people.

The People Business, Providing Care

At NuWest we have the good fortune to work with incredible healthcare leaders day-in and day-out. And, at the AHA Summit we met even more really smart professionals, all dedicated to finding solutions that will bring balance to our complex healthcare ecosystem. As we look for key takeaways from this year's conference, let's bring a little Seattle success back to our organizations.

Like Starbucks, let's focus on the well-being of our teams. Let's honor and value our workforce. And let's learn from leaders like Shultz, reminding ourselves and our teams, "We are not in the healthcare business caring for people. We are in the people business providing care."

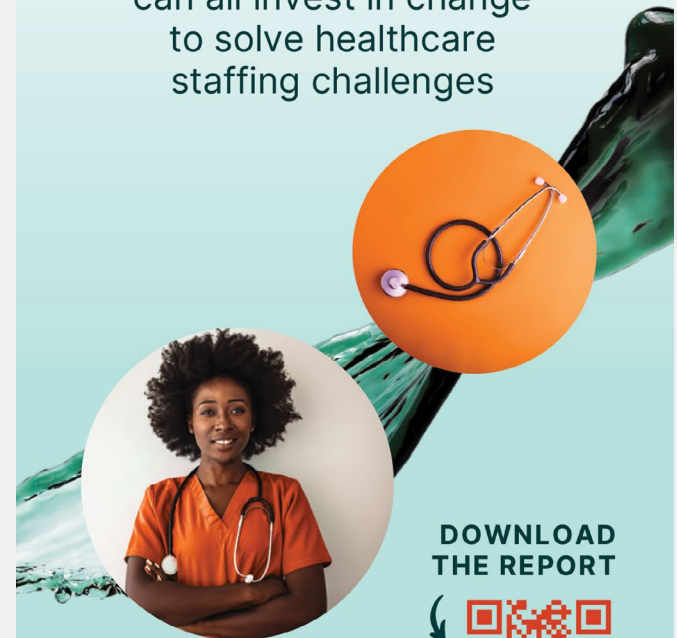
If we focus on our people, we will achieve our collective mission: better patient outcomes.



Donald Nosek
Head of Growth, NuWest Group

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SUSTAINABLE STAFFING SOLUTIONS



“Embedding health equity priorities in strategic plans is a core entry point to create lasting change,” said Joy Lewis, AHA senior vice president of health-equity strategies.

HEALTH EQUITY | Create a road map to health equity

Eliminating structural barriers that compromise diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in hospitals and health systems is essential to providers committed to supporting a just society of healthy communities. And whether the issue is improving maternal health, creating a more diverse workforce or addressing equity of care within specific populations, health care leaders made clear that a road map is necessary to advance health equity. Executives from four health systems shared insights about their organizational journeys in this process and the role the AHA’s Health Equity Roadmap is playing in their

march toward continuous improvement. Here are some key lessons learned along the way.

1. GET A BASELINE READ ON YOUR EQUITY DATA | The Health Equity Transformation Assessment ([HETA](#)), an electronic tool, helps hospitals and health systems determine what they’re doing well and where more focused effort may be needed. This first step in the journey enables organizations to establish some baseline data around key performance indicators as they pertain to the strategies and actions to promote health equity. More than 1,100 hospitals and health systems have engaged with the AHA and requested the assessment. CommonSpirit Health is analyzing its HETA data to identify areas of focus for hospitals in its system, said Rosalyn Carpenter, chief diversity, equity, inclusion and community impact officer.

Takeaway: Research and experience show that health equity strategies cut across six levers of transformation within organizational structures. HETA participants learn what’s needed to build internal capacity to improve performance and advance equity goals.

2. EMBED EQUITY IN YOUR STRATEGY | Erfan Karim, executive director, ExpressCare, NYC Health+Hospitals, New York City, said his organization’s employees were focused on improving equity of care, but as leaders assessed priorities, they decided equity needed to be a strategic pillar for the system. They realized there were inequities related to technology. By listening to patients and providers, they realized that 30% of patients did not have a smartphone or internet access. That led to steps to address these patients’ needs.

Takeaway: Embedding health-equity priorities in strategic plans is a core entry point to create lasting change, noted Joy Lewis, AHA senior vice president, health equity strategies. There is also a pivotal role that hospital and health system boards play in supporting this work. Boards should see themselves as influencers to work with the organization’s leaders to create an accountable system that will track

and measure progress through regular evaluation of metrics.

Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin developed an enterprise-wide council chaired by its CEO to examine all aspects of DEI, said Mark Lodes, M.D., vice president and chief medical officer, population health and medical education. The health system also began an anti-racism campaign last year. Froedtert's board receives a monthly composite health-equity report similar to those trustees receive for inpatient and ambulatory care quality. This has led to a heightened sense of discipline about how business development and strategic planning are conducted. For all new initiatives, there is a health equity thread within those plans, Lodes said.

3. RECONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITIES | University Hospitals in Cleveland convened a community advisory council after engaging with residents in the Hough neighborhood on the city's east side to determine what type of wraparound services were needed with the UH Rainbow Ahuja Center for Women & Children, said Celina Cunanan, APRN-CNM, chief diversity, equity and belonging officer. It quickly became clear that a wide range of services would be needed, including ultrasound, vision, dental, pharmacy, social needs navigation, legal aid, nutrition and behavioral health.

Takeaway: Reconnecting with communities that may have felt disenfranchised over time is vital to building trust and can jumpstart efforts to accelerate progress in historically marginalized communities.

4. BUILD A FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH EQUITY | There is a national emergency in maternal health before, during and after pregnancy, especially among communities of color and those living in poverty, impacted by social and structural determinants. The U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rates among developed countries (26.4 deaths per 100,000 live births) and maternal deaths are on the rise. Black women face more than double the average maternal mortality rate. To improve maternal health outcomes across the continuum of care, Ascension developed a framework for

early and increased prenatal care visits, better management of chronic diseases and risk factors associated with poor outcomes and increased connections to ongoing care and social services.

Takeaway: Respond to the social barriers to receiving perinatal care by listening to and organizing learnings from community residents about the complex underlying issues and existing solutions. Disrupt the systemic social barriers that prevent access to coordinated social services and use navigators to connect patients to health system and community-based resources. Partner with internal and external stakeholders to scale and sustain the program and incorporate evidence-based practices such as food as medicine and transportation barriers.

| TRANSFORMATION |

How to achieve future-forward transformation

Health care is facing no shortage of concerns today, be they financial-, workforce- or technology-related. And yet, there was an underlying current of confidence and optimism expressed by many health care leaders about how they plan to face the future and reshape the way they engage with consumers, retail competitors and technology. Here's what they plan to focus on to achieve future-forward transformation.

1. OPERATE FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH | Regardless of their size or location, hospitals are powerful economic engines for their communities and have important advantages over their competitors, said Janice Nevin, M.D., president and CEO, ChristianaCare, Wilmington, Delaware. Patients value and appreciate hospitals in a way that supersedes other relationships they may have with retail providers or pharmacies. Patients often measure their relationships with physicians and hospitals over a lifetime rather than in months or years. It's important to recog-



Warner L. Thomas, Sutter Health's president and CEO, said, "Patients want an integrated and coordinated care experience, and hospitals and health systems are best positioned to do that, but the question is: Will we lean into that?"

nize this and build on these relationships while pinpointing areas where they can elevate service.

Takeaway: Be confident yet humble in knowing what your organization does well and where it has gaps, Nevin suggested. Develop a deep understanding of those gaps and when to seek partners to address those areas. "Patients want an integrated and coordinated care experience, and hospitals and health systems are best positioned to do that, but the question is: Will we lean into that?" said Warner L. Thomas, president and CEO of Sutter Health.

2. LEARN FROM RETAIL COMPETITORS | Provider organizations

can learn a lot from retail competitors about the nimbleness and level of convenience retail health care locations offer, said Terika Richardson, MPH, chief operating officer for Ardent Health Services in Nashville, Tennessee. Nevertheless, many retail outlets essentially offer point solutions, Sutter Health's Thomas said, which may create more fragmentation rather than integration with the patient's primary care provider.

Takeaway: Focus on making ambulatory care services easier to access and use, Thomas suggests. Measure yourself against retailers and other industries on ease of use, scheduling and other areas. Imagine if Amazon told customers that only some products were available online and that for other products, customers would have to call to place an order. That's often what happens in health care organizations when it comes to scheduling, Thomas said, adding that the field will need to improve on seeing things through patients' eyes and making their experience as easy as possible.

3. DRIVE INNOVATION THROUGH CULTURE | Innovation is a strategic priority for health care leaders to develop alternative, cost-effective, technology-enabled, patient-centric care models. Challenges that never go away contribute to workforce burnout. Encouraging staff to engage in problem-solving and innovation gives them back a sense of control to improve their environment. Flexible staffing models, virtual care, new care technologies and AI analytics offer solutions to workflow pain points. Formal programs with funding and project management empower staff to propose ideas that can be developed into solutions and scaled without being burdensome.

Takeaway: Start with workflows. Have regular touchpoints to listen to staff and patient pain points. Foster a culture of engagement in problem-solving to address challenges and reward employees for their ideas. Implement ideas as soon as possible. Build out new workflows with team input. Pilot solutions and adapt for the needs of the local community. Celebrate success.



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4. GET CLOSER TO PATIENTS | If providers are going to create equitable access to care and improve the health of populations and make care more affordable, care delivery must move closer to where people are, Nevin said. This isn't about creating concierge medicine for a select few but about creating new care venues in the home and community.

Takeaway: Health care organizations are competing daily to create and sustain relationships with patients, Thomas said. "Disruptors, insurers and others are trying to make health care easier to use and navigate, as are we The question is: Who is going to do it better and faster."

5. INVEST IN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR ENHANCED CARE DELIVERY | Technology is providing new ways to connect with patients — changing not only how providers communicate, but also where they deliver care. Mayo Clinic has been investing heavily in digital solutions to enhance patient care, said Prathibha Varkey, president of Mayo Clinic Health System. Mayo's Center for Digital Health launched in 2020 with the mission of leveraging technologies and virtual solutions to seamlessly complement in-person care from anywhere. Improving access to care in rural areas through digital innovation is a primary focus for the center. One example is Mayo's new virtual anesthesiology platform, which has dramatically reduced colonoscopy wait times in remote areas.

Takeaway: Integrating technology into care delivery workflows to enhance outcomes and the patient experience is essential. This allows providers to create more effective and efficient automated processes to ease administrative burden and make care delivery more efficient. Moving beyond point solutions to a truly interoperable digital network will be critically important going forward.

RECOVERY

Focus on financial fundamentals to speed recovery

Hospitals and health systems are facing unprecedented financial challenges. The only way to overcome this crisis is to focus on stabilizing expenses, said Nathan Kaufman, managing director of Kaufman Strategic Advisors. "Your primary job is to solve this equation: Revenue minus expenses equals survival [or better]." Kaufman offered practical steps to achieve this state, including:

- Develop partnerships where core competencies aren't strong (e.g., in-home health care, revenue-cycle management, etc.).
- Focus on getting paid necessary rates instead of volume of service.
- Reduce duplication of services and make the difficult decisions to exit markets where positions are weak.
- Optimize primary care, women's health, orthopedics, cancer, urology, cardiac, urgent care and emergency department service lines.

Takeaway: Focus on fundamentals like smart revenue growth, development of service lines, expense management and asset rationalization. Providers that focus on what they do best — measurement, urgency and outcomes — will be able to deliver healthier balance sheets, Kaufman said.

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