We wanted to take the bull by the horns and become one of the largest urgent care organizations to achieve accreditation. We knew it would give us an extra layer of patient trust and demonstrate our excellence."

CityMD leadership has been involved with the Joint Commission and was well aware of the benefits of hospital accreditation—and knew they wanted something similar for their urgent care practice. So, when UCA began to offer accreditation, they knew they would pursue it.

“As we wanted to take the bull by the horns and become one of the largest urgent care organizations to achieve accreditation,” says David Shih, MD, executive vice president of strategy on health & innovation and co-founder of CityMD. “We knew it would give us an extra layer of patient trust and demonstrate our excellence.”

While CityMD had already made the decision to pursue accreditation, a strong catalyst to obtain it sooner rather than later came up: a major insurer decided to stop payments to CityMD until they achieved accreditation.

While their organization is large and robust—including full-time clinical and operations staff in every region supporting all business functions—this breadth and depth also meant many stakeholders would need to be involved in the process to achieve accreditation.

Dr. Shih, who was serving as chief medical officer at the time, explains how they approached it.

First, a project manager was assigned to the initiative and she outlined the crucial steps to follow, monitored the details, scheduled a series of trainings and meetings, and more.

“Our ‘ground troops’ included our legal team, clinical, quality and performance teams, operations, human resources, credentialing, and others,” explains Dr. Shih. “These team members—about 20 total—went out to our sites in all three states where we operate, began initial assessments and developed educational materials for training.”

“Our first training was with our regional managers and directors to get their understanding of what needed to happen,” says Dr. Shih. “From there, we...
When asked what other organizations should think about if they are considering accreditation, Dr. Shih says there are several things to keep in mind. “Health care is trending towards a value-based system—doctors and practices must demonstrate their value and quality. This is also being required by some payers, and I believe eventually it will be required by all of them. You can wait, but if you do, it will be harder to catch up,” he says. “It is a major commitment, and a lot of work, and you need leadership support. But, without question, it is well worth it.”

Dr. Shih says that although the vast majority of the policies they reviewed were in good shape, some were outdated and needed to be redrafted, while others needed to be created.

“The process is eye-opening, because we were able to identify where we had variability,” says Dr. Shih. “For example, when it came to the location of some of our equipment, we thought we always kept it in a specific place. However, we realized that was not the case across all our sites.”

The team also conducted many simulated site inspections, some planned and some unplanned, to practice for the actual site survey from UCA.

“A key challenge was conveying the urgency of the initiative—a payer had stopped paying—while at the same time making facilities understand they were not being judged and we were there to help,” explains Dr. Shih.

CityMD moved at a rapid pace: they began their work in February 2017 and by late April they were preparing for the UCA site surveys. Getting to this point involved staff working evenings and weekends to make it happen.

When it came time for the actual UCA site surveys, the process took more than a week. Surveyors went to all three states, conducting random inspections at 30 percent of CityMD’s sites. At the end, the hard work paid off, and the organization passed with flying colors.

Dr. Shih reflects on the many benefits of pursuing—and achieving—accreditation.

“An unexpected benefit was that it was a morale booster—to make this happen, everyone had to be committed and take it seriously,” he explains. “We did collaborate well, and as a result, it has brought us even closer together. So, we not only were proud that we achieved accreditation, we were proud of the way all our team members met this challenge.”

Leverage UCA Resources to Achieve Accreditation:

- Attend UCA conferences/conventions to network with others in the accreditation process.
- Take advantage of the Online Education library to help you prepare for an on-site survey.
- Invest in the UCA Accreditation Standards and Preparation Manual to establish best practices in your organization.
- Purchase the Policy and Procedure Manual to augment and standardize your organization’s policies.

Visit ucaoa.org to learn more.