

Strategies & SOLUTIONS

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Strategies and Solutions for Redefining the Role of the Medical Staff

The physician marketplace and the relationship between physicians and hospitals have never been more tumultuous, nor so much in transition. The substantial and often symbiotic relationship of physicians to hospitals is being eroded by economic forces that are increasing out-of-hospital care and the independence of physicians. One of the traditional, last vestiges of physician interaction with hospitals—the medical staff—is now in danger of becoming a noninfluential entity.



The challenge for hospitals and systems is how to redefine the role of the medical staff to be a viable entity to help address many complex issues and foster collaboration between hospitals and physicians. Examples of these issues are:

- Relating to physicians who work exclusively in the office or outpatient setting and have minimal contact or interaction with the hospital
- Including physicians in the governance and decision making of the hospital
- Dealing with physicians pursuing competitive initiatives (e.g., imaging centers, ambulatory surgery centers)
- Involving medical staff in service line planning and development and quality improvement initiatives
- Coping with a decline in employment of physicians by hospitals and systems that historically forced integration of hospitals and physicians

To effectively address these issues, hospitals and systems should consider redefining the role of the medical staff and strengthening the medical staff as a vehicle for improving relationships with physicians by embracing the following strategies:

- Charge the medical staff with primary responsibility for improving clinical quality
- Include medical staff leaders (formal and informal) in service line planning and development in a more significant manner; incorporate off-site ambulatory services development in service line planning to provide an opportunity to be more proactive in meeting the needs of physicians
- Enable the medical staff to serve as the physician organization that evaluates potential partnerships between hospitals and physicians (e.g., joint ventures, management contracts)
- Increase medical staff membership on the board of trustees and conduct formalized leadership training for emerging and new medical staff leaders
- Have the medical staff collaborate with the board of trustees to develop a medical staff plan that determines community need for physicians and sets practice recruitment and retention guidelines
- Expand the role of vice president of medical affairs to chief medical officer; add responsibilities to facilitate quality measurement and improvement and incorporation of clinical information systems
- Implement a purposeful and extensive physician practice outreach program to regularly assess physician needs and satisfaction with hospital operations and systems
- Resolve inefficient operations and systems that often cause physicians to develop independent, competitive ambulatory services
- Pursue development of programs and services that provide concrete value to physicians on the medical staff, such as a hospitalist program, information systems linkages, practice promotion and marketing, and real estate leasing and management

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Off the Press Recent Articles



"Integrated Delivery Organizations Call for Better Strategic Planning," by Alan Zuckerman, November/December issue of *Health Forum Journal*

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On the Dais Upcoming Presentations



American College of Healthcare Executives

Alan Zuckerman: "Strategic Planning: From Formulation to Action," ACHE Online Seminar, October 11 to November 15

Alan Zuckerman: "Strategic Planning from Formulation to Action," American College of Healthcare Executives Cluster Session, October 17 to 18 in Williamsburg and November 12 to 13 in San Antonio

VHA Strategy Executives

Alan Zuckerman: "Top Contemporary Strategic Planning Models," October 24 in Williamsburg

Wisconsin Forum for Healthcare Strategy

Craig Holm: "Building Relationships with Your Medical Staff," November 5 in Pewaukee, Wisconsin

Carolinas Healthcare Public Relations and Marketing Society

Christie Markham: "Don't be a DRIP: Data Rich, But Information Poor," November 14 in Charleston, South Carolina

The medical staff can play an increasingly vital role in addressing today's and tomorrow's complex issues. By providing demonstrable value to medical staff members, physicians may be less likely to be competitors with the hospital.



HSS and NACHRI Look at Pediatric Health Trends

Health Strategies & Solutions and the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions (NACHRI) have collaborated to prepare a report that profiles the future of children's health care. *Child Healthscan 2003* looks at key trends affecting pediatric health care, and includes the results of a recent survey of NACHRI members. For more information on the report, please contact Christie Markham at 215-636-3500, extension 102.



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Health Strategies & Solutions, Inc., is a national management consulting firm dedicated to helping organizations discover innovative strategies and solutions for today's complex health care challenges. Our staff has enabled hundreds of health care organizations across the country to address complex issues, make decisions that achieve lasting results, and set courses for success in the new millennium.

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