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1. Abbott. Data on File. Rapid Test Times to Result Analysis. 2. ID NOW™ Influenza A & B 2 clinical trial data, held on file. 3. Merckx J, Wali R, Schiller I, et al. Diagnostic accuracy of novel and traditional rapid tests for influenza infection compared with reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Ann Intern Med.* 2017;167(6):394-409. 4. ID NOW™ Strep A 2 Clinical Trial Data on File 5. Chartrand C, Tremblay N, Renaud C, et al. Diagnostic Accuracy of Rapid Antigen Detection Tests for Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *J Clin Microbiol.* 2015;53(12):3738-49.

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Why The Best Story Wins

As we head into the fourth quarter, most sales professionals are thinking about closing the year strong. You are looking at your forecast, pipeline, opportunities still on the table and the number you committed to months ago.

At *Repertoire*, we are doing the same thing, but our fourth quarter looks different. In fact, we're already working on 2027, talking with manufacturers about advertising, education, content and access to the medical distribution community.

As you build your 2027 marketing plan, consider a few numbers.



Scan the QR Code and watch

There are approximately 5,000 medical distribution sales representatives across the United States who influence billions of dollars in purchasing decisions. Collectively, these reps are chasing an estimated $67 billion in medical-surgical supply sales and may have access to more than 350,000 SKUs.

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That is why we believe one simple principle: The best story wins.

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We believe distribution sales rep mindshare equals market share. If your brand is top of mind when a rep walks into a physician office, ASC, laboratory, health system or long-term care facility, you have a better opportunity to earn the business. Flip through this issue and look at the best-in-class manufacturers who, in many cases, have trusted us for more than 20 years to tell their story.

So, as you establish your 2027 marketing budget, start with your growth number.

Are you forecasting 8% growth? 10%? 12%?

Then ask us a different question:

"How can *Repertoire* help us hit that number?"

Don't simply give us an advertising budget and ask what you can buy. Give us your growth objective. Tell us the products, markets and customers you need to reach. Then challenge our team to build an advertising, education and content strategy around that goal.

You have a number to hit in 2027.

Let us build a plan to help you get there.

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What Elite Athletes Can Teach Reps

Elite athletes and top-performing sales reps have more in common than you might think. Dr. Brad Bellard offers practical strategies to help readers build strength, prioritize recovery, sleep better and sustain high performance throughout the workweek.

Listen to this article, scan the QR Code.

Most *Repertoire Magazine* readers will never suit up for a professional sports team, but the habits that help elite athletes perform at the highest level can offer valuable lessons for anyone whose job demands long hours, constant travel and consistent results.

Few people understand that connection better than Dr. Brad Bellard. As a sports medicine physician who works with professional athletes, Dr. Bellard helps some of the world's top performers stay healthy, recover from injuries and maintain peak performance throughout demanding seasons. Yet his philosophy extends far beyond the locker room.

Dr. Bellard's journey into sports medicine began as a young athlete. After undergoing surgery performed by a team physician for the Houston Rockets, he found a career path that combined his passion for sports with a desire to help others.



That experience sparked a career dedicated to helping athletes perform at their best. As a team physician for the Denver Broncos, Dr. Bellard works directly with elite athletes to optimize performance and prevent injury on the field. He also serves as a sports medicine physician at The Sports Center - CommonSpirit Health.

But Dr. Bellard and his colleagues have always embraced a broader mission. "We want to treat athletes at the highest level, but also provide that same level of care to everyday people and weekend warriors who are simply trying to optimize their health," he said.

For med/surg reps, whose days often consist of windshield time or air travel, customer visits and long hours on their feet, many of the same principles apply. In a conversation with *Repertoire Magazine*, Dr. Bellard shared practical insights on recovery, sleep, nutrition, exercise and injury prevention that can help readers improve their health and wellness.

Success starts with intention

When people watch professional athletes compete, they often focus on physical talent. But according to Dr. Bellard, one of the biggest differentiators between elite performers and everyone else is something much simpler: intention.

Professional athletes treat their health the same way other professionals approach their careers. Just as physicians continually develop their skills and knowledge, athletes are deliberate about every aspect of their performance.

"They treat their body with a certain level of intention in terms of workout and nutrition and recovery," Dr. Bellard explained. "If you give that level of intention to just about anything, you're probably going to see some level of results."

Understand what your body needs

For high-achieving professionals, the instinct is often to push harder, work longer and keep moving. It may sound counterintuitive, but one of the most important lessons Dr. Bellard has learned from working with elite athletes is that peak performance requires strategic recovery.

"Recovery is extraordinary," Dr. Bellard said. "Rarely is it an issue of someone not doing enough to get better. It's really trying to slow people down so that they can get better."

Whether recovering from a tough workout, a demanding travel schedule or a string of long workdays, the body needs time to repair itself. "If muscles are fatigued or they're hurt or injured going into a workout or an activity, it's one of the easiest ways to invite injury into the situation," Dr. Bellard said.

Like elite athletes, high-performing sales professionals often sacrifice sleep in pursuit of productivity.

Like athletes, many reps are wired to keep pushing forward. Yet Dr. Bellard emphasizes that recovery should not be viewed as lost time.

"We're constantly telling our athletes, 'We're going to have to slow down a little bit so that we can eventually speed up,'" he said.

The key is recognizing that rest is not separate from performance. It is a critical component of it. Just as workouts, customer visits and business development activities are scheduled intentionally, recovery should be planned as well.

"We try to instill in their mind that rest and recovery is part of your workout plan. It's not taking away from your workout plan," Dr. Bellard said. "When people understand that rest and recovery is actually part of performing at your best, they realize that taking a step back is actually helping their overall performance."

Create a plan

The daily routine of a med/surg rep may look very different from that of a professional athlete, but both place unique physical demands on the body. Long hours behind the wheel or frequent air travel, extended periods of standing and constant movement between customer locations can take a cumulative toll over time.

Dr. Bellard sees those effects firsthand.

"One of the things that can be an issue is spine issues from being static in one place for so long," he said, referring to the long stretches of sitting that often accompany travel. While the discomfort may not be noticeable initially, the effects can build gradually.

"You may not feel it now, but these things accumulate over time and then eventually it turns into something that someone's actually feeling from a symptom perspective," he said.

The solution, Dr. Bellard said, begins with the same principle that drives elite athletic performance: having a plan.

Among his top recommendations is incorporating some form of resistance training. It doesn't require heavy lifting or hours in the gym. The goal is

simply to build and maintain strength. "Our muscles are our support for our skeleton," Dr. Bellard said. "To be able to be strong is important."

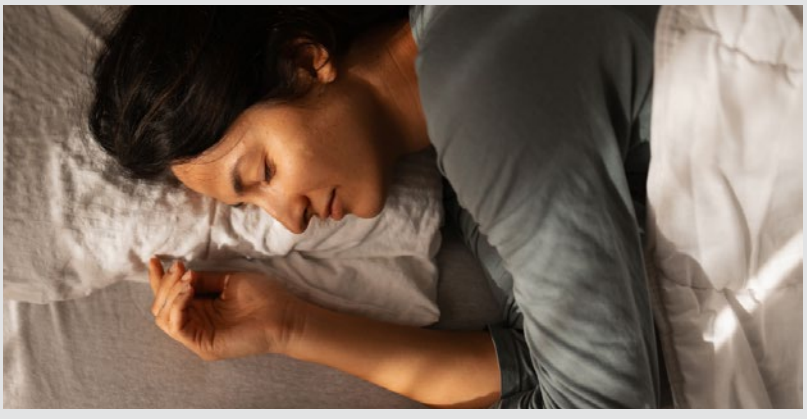
He also recommended regular cardiovascular exercise, such as brisk walking, jogging, cycling or other activities that elevate the heart rate for 20 to 30 minutes. Consistent movement helps offset the effects of a sedentary travel schedule while supporting overall cardiovascular health.

Finally, Dr. Bellard suggested a performance tool that many ambitious professionals overlook: sleep.

"Sleep is massively important," he said.

Like elite athletes, high-performing sales professionals often sacrifice sleep in pursuit of productivity. But Dr. Bellard cautioned that the "go, go, go" mentality can ultimately undermine performance.

"If you can really look at your sleep as part of your performance plan, then what people recognize is that the amount of time they have to either do the workout or do their work is actually going to be much more effective if they can get good recovery in the form of sleep," he said.



Sleep: More than just rest

Most people view sleep as a way to recharge after a long day, but research highlighted by Dr. Bellard shows it plays a far bigger role in overall health and performance.

"Sleep doesn't just affect how we feel. It really affects our stress level," Dr. Bellard said.

That matters because chronic stress can impact cardiovascular, endocrine, and respiratory systems. When sleep is consistently lacking, it's not just fatigue — it's a reduced ability to regulate stress and maintain normal body function.

"It's beyond just being tired," Dr. Bellard explained. "If you're chronically not getting sleep, it's likely affecting other systems in the body."

Active recovery

One of the most effective ways to stay healthy and avoid injury is through what sports medicine experts call "active recovery."

According to Dr. Bellard, active recovery means giving the body a chance to recover while still staying in motion.

"It's really saying I'm doing something that's still active, I'm still moving, but it's either rotating the body part that we're working out or we are not going nearly at the intensity that we did on the day prior," he said.

For athletes, that might mean following a heavy upper-body workout with a lighter mobility session or a leg workout. Similarly, after a high-intensity training session, the next day should focus on lower-intensity activity rather than another grueling workout.

"If someone has a high-intensity training session, doing another high-intensity training the following day is not wise," Dr. Bellard said. "You're going to risk injury and overall you're not allowing your body to recover."

The same principle applies to medical sales representatives. Simple activities such as brisk walking, riding a stationary bike or using a treadmill while traveling can serve as effective forms of active recovery, helping keep the body moving between workouts and reducing the risk of overuse injuries.

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The beauty of active recovery, Dr. Bellard said, is that it doesn't have to be disruptive. "You can still allow your body to be active, you can still take in some information and not be exhausted," he said.

Fuel performance

When it comes to nutrition, Dr. Bellard keeps his advice practical and grounded. No fad diets or complicated regimens. The fundamentals, he said, remain unchanged.

"Water [is key]. Look, this hasn't changed, never going to change," he said. "We've got to drink water," he said. For coffee-dependent professionals who rely on caffeine to power through long days, Dr. Bellard isn't asking anyone to give up their morning cup. He's simply making the case that water needs to be a consistent priority alongside it.

Beyond hydration, Dr. Bellard emphasizes the importance of timing meals around physical activity. The body needs fuel before a workout, whether that's a run, a resistance session or a high-intensity training block, and the right nutrients afterward to recover properly.

"The body needs fuel prior to doing that," he said, recommending a carbohydrate-focused meal 30 minutes to an hour before exercise. Without adequate fuel, muscles fatigue faster, and the risk of injury climbs. "If the muscles are getting fatigued quickly because they just don't have the fuel, you're going to risk injury simply because you didn't have the fuel there."

The throughline connecting all of Bellard's advice – recovery, sleep, active movement and nutrition – comes back to intention.

Post-workout nutrition is equally important. After resistance training, Dr. Bellard recommends a combination of carbohydrates and protein within an hour of finishing. After cardiovascular exercise, replenishing carbohydrates is the priority. "The body is literally hungry to be able to take on these fuels," he said.

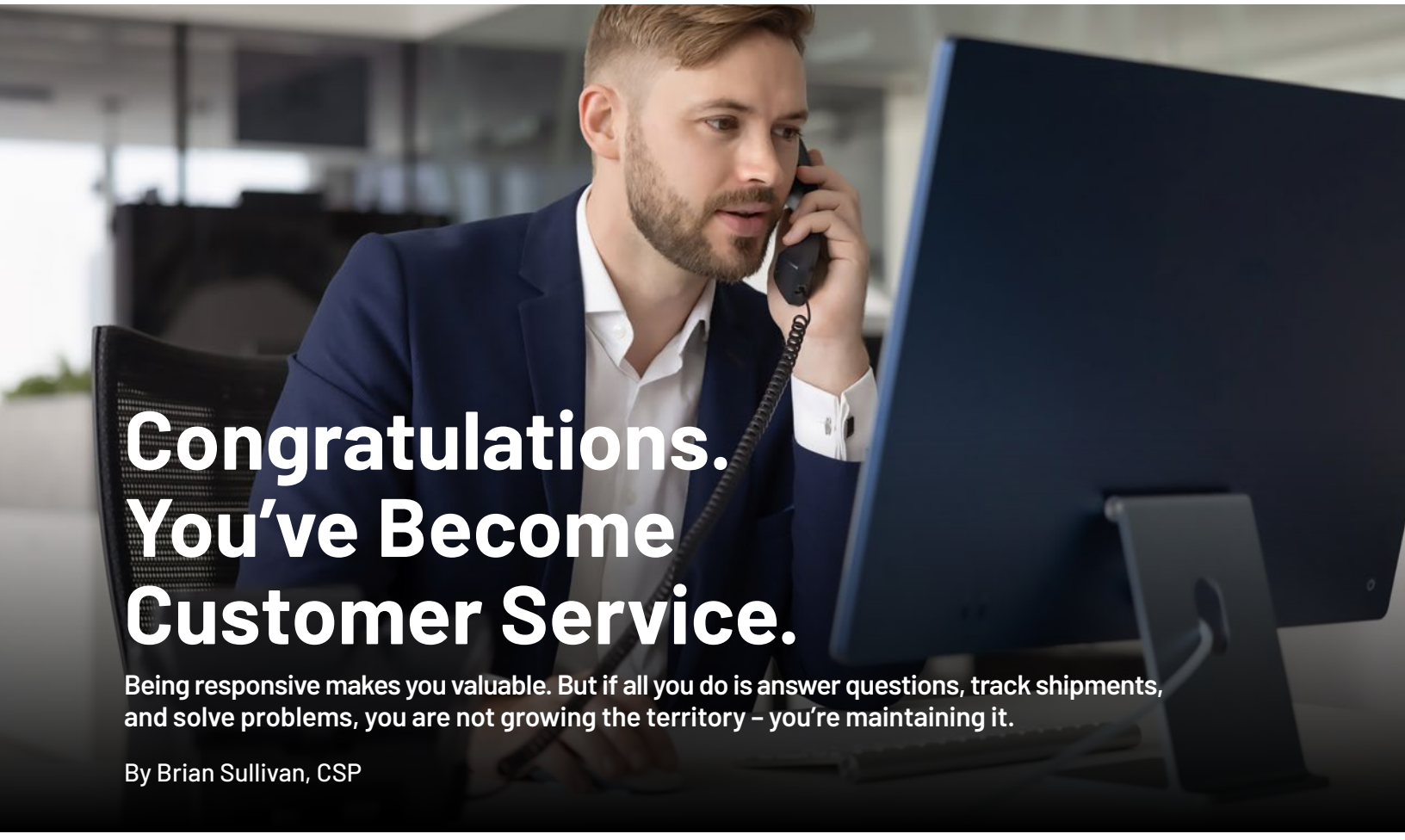
For those with a sweet tooth, Dr. Bellard even offers a guilt-reducing tip: time your indulgences strategically. Having a small treat 30 minutes to an hour before a workout isn't unreasonable, he explained, because the body will quickly burn through it as fuel.

"If you want to have a couple bites of the Snickers 30 minutes to an hour before you work out, that's actually not completely unreasonable," he said. "It's going to be used as immediate fuel to actually do what it needs to do."

The throughline connecting all of Dr. Bellard's advice – recovery, sleep, active movement and nutrition – comes back to intention. For medical sales representatives navigating demanding schedules, the goal isn't perfection. It's being deliberate about the choices that add up over

Key Takeaways

- **Be intentional about your health.** Elite performance starts with making recovery, nutrition, exercise and sleep a deliberate part of your routine.
- **Recovery drives performance.** Rest and active recovery help prevent injury, improve resilience and keep you performing at your best.
- **Have a plan for movement.** Regular strength training, cardio and stretching help offset the physical demands of long hours and frequent travel.
- **Fuel your body wisely.** Proper hydration and well-timed nutrition provide the energy needed for peak performance and faster recovery.



Congratulations. You've Become Customer Service.

Being responsive makes you valuable. But if all you do is answer questions, track shipments, and solve problems, you are not growing the territory – you're maintaining it.

By Brian Sullivan, CSP

Listen to this article, scan the QR Code.

Congratulations. You answered 47 emails, tracked down three missing shipments, fixed a pricing issue, found a substitute product and sat through two internal meetings that could have been emails.

You were incredibly busy. You may have also sold absolutely nothing.

Welcome to one of the most dangerous traps in medical distribution: becoming a customer service representative who happens to carry a sales quota. Service matters, especially in healthcare. Great reps do not disappear when things get messy. But service and selling are not the same thing, and trouble starts when today's problems eat the whole week.

The busy rep's favorite hiding place

Reactive work feels productive because people thank you for it. Customers tell your manager how helpful you are. You end the day exhausted, convinced you gave everything.

Maybe you did. But exhaustion is not a sales metric.

There is a reason this work is so easy to sink into. Service pays immediately, and it pays in appreciation. Find a case of product nobody else could find and a materials manager tells you that you saved her week.

Service work is guaranteed applause. People take the applause every time, and then call it putting the customer first.

Meanwhile, nobody thanks you for a prospecting call. Growth work is slow to pay and carries a real chance of rejection.

I asked a veteran rep where his next big opportunity was coming from. He gave me an update on two backorders, a credit issue and a customer who needed samples by Thursday.

I asked again. "Where is your next piece of new business coming from?"

He stared at me like I had switched languages. He wasn't dodging me. He simply hadn't thought about it in months because nothing in his week had forced him to. He was working hard. He just wasn't selling.

That is how the trap works. Urgent work replaces important work, and because the urgent stuff is visible and appreciated, nobody notices the territory has stopped growing until the pipeline looks like an abandoned mall.

Service the business. Grow the business. Find new business.

Every rep has three jobs. Service the business: solve problems and take care of the customers already buying. Grow the business: ask better questions inside existing accounts and find the categories and problems you can solve. Find new business: prospect, open doors and start conversations with people who are not buying today.

Most reps are excellent at the first. Some do the second occasionally. Far too many avoid the third like it requires a medical procedure and no anesthesia, then they wonder why the territory is flat.

Service keeps the business healthy. Growth keeps your career healthy.



Turn service moments into sales moments

You do not need to be pushy or turn every backorder into a hostage negotiation. The customer called for help, so help them. Then stay curious.

"I'll get that shipment issue handled. While I have you, how are you managing shortages in the other departments?"

"I'll take care of the pricing correction. Before we hang up, has anything changed in your procedure volume this quarter?"

That is not a cheesy upsell. It is professional curiosity. Service earns access; questions turn access into opportunity. The rep who solves the problem gets appreciated. The rep who brings back an idea becomes indispensable.

Audit the calendar, not the intentions

Open last week's calendar and mark every block:

- **M is for maintenance:** anything a competent coordinator could have handled – tracking, quoting, problem solving, meetings about problems.
- **G is for growth:** anything that could create revenue that does not exist today.
- **A prospecting call.** A conversation about a line an existing customer has never bought.

When you are unsure, mark it M. Most reps land between 80% and 90% maintenance. If your growth number is under

20%, your pipeline will eventually expose it.

Block the growth time before the service emergencies arrive. Small is fine. Inconsistent is not.

Customer service is the floor, not the ceiling

Your customers deserve fast responses, fixed problems and follow-through. That is the price of admission, not the achievement. Your company did not hand you a territory to protect yesterday's orders. It hired you to create tomorrow's.

Do all of it. Just do not confuse being needed with growing the territory.

Your customers may love you. Your manager may praise you. But eventually, somebody is going to ask where the growth is coming from.

And "I've been really busy" is going to sound exactly as weak as it is.

Brian Sullivan, CSP, is the founder of PRECISE Selling and author of "PRECISE Selling: 20 Days to the Top". With 35 years of experience in healthcare and medical distribution sales, he delivers keynotes, bootcamps, and outsourced sales development for companies nationwide. Contact him at preciseselling.com.

Key Takeaways

- Busywork can feel productive, but excessive service tasks can prevent reps from creating new sales opportunities.
- Successful reps balance customer service, account growth, and new business development responsibilities.
- Service interactions create opportunities when reps ask thoughtful questions and uncover customer needs.
- Reps should audit calendars and protect dedicated time for growth activities and prospecting.



Starting Strong

From storytelling to strategic selling, young med/surg sales reps discuss the lessons, challenges and technologies shaping the future of healthcare sales.

Editor's note: *The first part of this series appeared in the August 2026 issue of* Repertoire Magazine. *Visit* www.repertoiremag.com *for more.*

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In part two of this roundtable discussion, five rising med/surg sales professionals share what they've learned early in their careers. From leveraging AI to work more efficiently to mastering the art of storytelling, they discuss the skills shaping the next generation of distributor sales representatives – and why, despite rapid advances in technology, success in healthcare sales still comes down to relationships and consistency.

Participating in the roundtable were:

- **Luke Kuna**, Territory Portfolio Manager, Midmark Corporation, Medical Division, South Carolina and Eastern North Carolina
- **Elise Mancabelli**, Field Sales Consultant, Henry Schein Medical, based in Boston, Massachusetts
- **Matisyn Schaut**, Field Sales Consultant, Henry Schein Medical, based in Saratoga Springs, New York
- **Melissa Spero**, Field Sales Consultant, Henry Schein Medical, based in Annapolis, Maryland
- **Liam Rohlsson**, Sales Representative, Global Medical Products and Distribution, Cardinal Health

What does communication look like in your role? How do you balance emails, texts, phone calls and in-person meetings?

Mancabelli: During the day, my focus is where I can provide the most value: face-to-face with customers in the field. Those in-person interactions are the foundation of our partnership. Phone calls serve as the bridge between those visits, keeping me responsive throughout the day.

I use my evenings in the home office to manage the administrative side of the business, such as deep-dive emails and planning. Balancing these channels is an exercise in intentionality; while the volume of incoming requests can be high, I evaluate the urgency and impact. Whether it's pausing to resolve a critical request before entering a practice or prioritizing a face-to-face consultation over an inbox alert, my goal is to ensure that my communication style is aligned with the customer's needs.

How has your background shaped the way you communicate and build trust with different types of customers?

Rohlsson: Growing up in Oakland, California, exposed me to a wide range of cultures, perspectives and communication styles from an early age. That diverse environment taught me to be adaptable and respectful in how I interact with others, and it made me comfortable building

relationships with people from all backgrounds.

The clinicians and healthcare staff members I work with come from all over the world, and understanding cultural nuances, such as communication preferences, body language or boundaries can make a meaningful difference in how to build trust. Recognizing how someone prefers to interact and leading with that can go a long way towards strengthening a relationship.

For me, it's about treating people with respect and maintaining a human-centered approach. Trust takes a long time to build and only a moment to lose, so being aware, intentional and culturally sensitive is something I take seriously in every interaction.

What's the best piece of sales advice you've ever received?

Rohlsson: Early in my first sales role, a mentor reminded me that first impressions are everything. How I prepare, present myself and communicate in those first interactions with a customer or other stakeholder can shape the entire relationship. I work with highly educated and experienced professionals, so I need to show up ready to add value as part of my first impression. That means understanding my products, anticipating questions, and communicating clearly and concisely. But at the same time, it's not just about jumping straight into business, it's about building rapport. Taking a moment to connect on a personal level, reading the room and setting a positive tone can make a big difference in how the conversation unfolds.

Treating everyone with the same level of respect and attention is another piece of advice that has had a lasting impact. Whether I'm speaking with a physician, a nurse, a materials manager, or a member of the environmental services team, consistency matters. Not only is it the right thing to do, but in a hospital setting, relationships are interconnected in many ways.

My long-term vision is to drive consistent business growth by deepening the partnerships I've already cultivated, ultimately becoming an even more integral resource for the healthcare providers in my community.

What are your short-term and long-term goals?

Kuna: One of the biggest things I'm focused on developing is becoming a true strategic partner to my customers rather than simply being viewed as a vendor brought in to quote equipment a few weeks before the clinic opens. When projects reach that point and before we're involved, I see it as an opportunity to reflect on how I could have engaged earlier and created more value throughout the planning process.

The conversations that create the greatest long-term impact usually happen much earlier, around workflow, room design, caregiver efficiency, patient accessibility and operational consistency. Those are the discussions where we can contribute in a meaningful way beyond the products themselves.

A big part of my focus has been positioning myself to have those higher-level conversations. That can mean discussing things many people overlook, like the placement of an exam chair, cabinetry layout, vitals capture or how room standardization affects caregiver movement throughout the day. When you can connect those details back to improving patient experience, supporting caregiver well-being, and creating efficiencies over time, customers begin to see you differently.

Ultimately, I'm trying to build relationships where Midmark is viewed as a trusted advisor in outpatient care design and workflow strategy, not just someone who shows up at the end of a project to push paper and coordinate a quote.

Mancabelli: Right now, I am dedicated to expanding my territory and supporting more practices, while ensuring that my established accounts continue to receive the same high level of personalized attention. My long-term vision is to drive consistent business growth by deepening the partnerships I've already cultivated, ultimately becoming an even more integral resource for the healthcare providers in my community.

Schaut: I am committed to the work I'm doing and the relationships I'm building. My goal is to continue evolving within my current territory, sharpening my expertise, and finding new ways to add value to my customers' daily operations. I take a lot of pride in the progress I've made here, and my focus remains on fostering long-term loyalty and ensuring that our service continues to be a standard-setter for the practices I support.

Are there any skills you're focused on developing this year?

Rohlsson: Right now, I'm focused on deepening both my technical knowledge and my situational awareness. It's not just about understanding products; it's about knowing when and how to apply that knowledge effectively. In areas like surgical gloves, for example, I'm working to fully understand the nuances, such as material differences, clinical preferences, and best practices, so I can speak confidently with experienced clinicians.

I'm also continuing to refine my time management and prioritization skills. Balancing current responsibilities while identifying future opportunities is key to long-term success in this role, especially given how long sales cycles can be.

Another major focus is consistency. In sales, it's easy to have strong periods followed by slower ones, but my goal is to maintain steady, reliable performance over time. That means staying disciplined, continuing to build relationships and always looking ahead.

Long term, I'm also interested in leadership. I've really enjoyed managing and mentoring others in the past, and I see that as a potential next step in my career. For now, I'm focused on building the foundation that will allow me to succeed at a high level and sustain that success over time.



One of the biggest skills I'm actively trying to develop right now is becoming a better storyteller.

Spero: My primary focus is deepening my product knowledge. Our product portfolio is vast, so I am being intentional about mastering specific areas, particularly the laboratory side of the business. I want to move past simply discussing reimbursement and clinical workflows; I want to truly understand the nuances so I can provide deeper consultative value. It's a complex area, but it's



a critical part of the conversation, and I'm committed to building that expertise to better serve our customers.

Mancabelli: I am focused on AI and data-driven agility. As the industry evolves, the ability to synthesize information quickly is a major advantage. I've been using AI to bridge the gap in my data analysis to help with complex formulas and to surface patterns in my sales metrics that I might have otherwise overlooked. By sharpening these analytical skills, I can pivot from being reactive to highly proactive, identifying opportunities to support customers.

Kuna: One of the biggest skills I'm actively trying to develop right now is becoming a better storyteller. Someone who can truly captivate an audience and create an emotional connection rather than simply present information.

Storytelling is something I've gained an even greater appreciation for recently. At our commercial summit earlier this year, we had a guest speaker who helped write *Toy Story*, and hearing him talk about storytelling was incredibly impactful because it connected so directly to what we do in healthcare sales.

It's relatively easy to learn product specifications and become highly knowledgeable about how equipment functions. But what really separates people in this industry is the ability to tell a story that builds trust, creates emotional connection, demonstrates compassion and helps customers see the deeper "why" behind what you're trying to accomplish.

That's also one reason I don't believe technology or AI will ever fully replace the human side of this profession. AI can absolutely help us become more efficient and informed, but genuine storytelling, emotional intelligence, and human connection are still incredibly powerful and uniquely human skills. I truly believe the best story wins, and that's something I'm constantly trying to improve every single day.

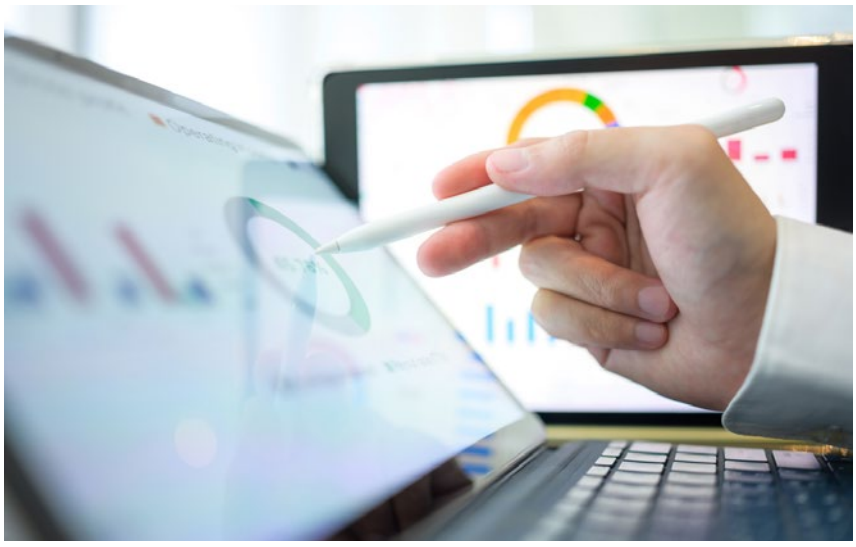
Schaut: I am focused on refining my perseverance and consistency. It's easy to get discouraged when a partnership doesn't materialize immediately, but I've learned that trust isn't built in a single visit; it's built through repeated, reliable presence. My goal is to be the most consistent partner in a customer's orbit.

How are you using digital tools, data, or even AI?

Kuna: I use AI and digital tools every day as a way to operate more efficiently and stay proactive within my territory. One of the biggest ways I leverage it is for prospecting and identifying new opportunities, whether that's tracking healthcare expansion projects, researching health system activity, or staying informed on industry trends that could impact my accounts.

I've also made great use of automated alerts and keyword tracking so I can keep a pulse on healthcare news, construction activity, leadership changes and other developments happening within my territory and surrounding markets. Having access to that information quickly helps me prepare more strategically and have more informed conversations with customers.

Internally, I've found AI to be an incredibly valuable support tool as well. I use it to help organize ideas, refine communication, think through



challenges from different angles and improve how I prepare for meetings and presentations.

That said, while technology can absolutely help us operate more effectively and efficiently, I don't believe it can replace the human side of this profession. At the end of the day, this business is still built on trust, relationships, emotional intelligence and judgment – and those are things that can only come from genuine human interaction and experience in the field.

Mancabelli: My approach is to be proactive rather than reactive, and data is the engine behind that. I rely on AI-driven analytics to identify emerging market trends, which allows me to anticipate my customers' needs before they even ask. When it comes to managing those relationships, I use Salesforce. It allows me to maintain a high-level view of my pipeline and document my interactions, ensuring that I'm always prepared.

Schaut: I use our internal digital tools daily to identify where we are gaining momentum and where we need to refine our strategy. To manage that volume of data, I've been integrating AI, specifically to distill complex information into actionable insights. For example, I can export data from our systems and use AI to generate clear, concise summaries that make tracking performance much more efficient. I also use AI to elevate my communications, transforming detailed product specifications into compelling, customer-focused messages. It allows me to spend less time on administration and more time on the meaningful work of engaging with our partners. rep

Key Takeaways

- **Strong relationships still drive sales success.** Trust is built through consistent, respectful communication, cultural awareness and meaningful face-to-face interactions — not technology alone.
- **Top-performing reps think like strategic advisors.** The most successful salespeople engage customers early, focusing on workflow, outcomes and long-term value instead of simply quoting products.
- **AI is making reps more efficient, not replacing them.** Young sales professionals are using AI to analyze data, identify opportunities, streamline communication and better prepare for customer conversations.
- **Continuous learning creates long-term growth.** From mastering storytelling and product expertise to improving consistency, time management and leadership skills, these reps see ongoing development as essential to success.

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25 Years of Purpose in Action

As Henry Schein Cares celebrates its 25th anniversary, Jennifer Kim Field reflects on how a commitment to 'doing well by doing good' has expanded access to care, strengthened disaster response and inspired the next generation of healthcare professionals.

Listen to this article, scan the QR Code.

Few measures of success are more meaningful than seeing the people you set out to help return years later to serve others. For Jennifer Kim Field, Chief Sustainability Officer at Henry Schein and President of the Henry Schein Cares Foundation, one of the most powerful examples of the program's impact is its long-standing partnership with the American Dental Association Foundation's Give Kids A Smile© program. As Henry Schein Cares marks 25 years of Helping Health Happen, the partnership offers a reminder that investments in access to care can create ripple effects that last for decades.

"As a longtime sponsor of Give Kids A Smile, we found ourselves wondering, 'Where are they now?'" Field said. "Give Kids A Smile has connected underserved children with free oral health education, screenings, preventive care and treatment, helping more than 10.2 million children since 2003. We were amazed to discover that some of the children who received care through the program years ago have become dentists themselves, and today, are volunteering with the very program that first introduced them to oral health care. It's an incredible full-circle moment and a powerful reminder that Give Kids A Smile doesn't just improve a child's smile in the moment, it can inspire the next generation of dental professionals."

For 25 years, Henry Schein Cares has served as the company's global corporate citizenship program, but its historical roots stretch back much further. Built on the belief that businesses can "do well by doing good," the initiative has grown from a formalized giving program into a companywide framework that guides disaster response, health access, sustainability, volunteerism and community partnerships around the world. Along the way, Henry Schein Cares has delivered more than $285 million in cash and product donations through more than 5,000 charitable partners while remaining focused on its original mission.

"We're most proud that our mission has remained the same even as our impact has grown," said Field. "Our mission to help health happen is embedded in Henry Schein's DNA, guiding how we serve customers, support communities, and operate responsibly."

Born from a time of crisis

While Henry Schein had long supported charitable giving and volunteer initiatives, the events of Sept. 11, 2001 became the catalyst for creating the formal Henry Schein Cares program. Headquartered on Long Island, just outside New York City, the company found itself responding to a crisis unfolding in its own backyard.

In the days following the attacks, Henry Schein rapidly mobilized medical and dental supplies for first responders and relief organizations working near Ground Zero. The experience demonstrated the unique role a healthcare solutions company could play by leveraging its supply chain expertise and supplier relationships to deliver critical products where they were needed most.

"We made a decision to formalize what had been an instinctive response into something much more permanent," Field said.

Field said the company's response to 9/11 became the blueprint for future disaster preparedness. Lessons learned during subsequent crises – including Hurricane Sandy and the Ebola outbreak – reinforced the importance of planning ahead rather than reacting in the moment. In 2015, Henry Schein helped establish the Pandemic Supply Chain Network, a public-private partnership designed to address personal protective equipment shortages before the next global health emergency.

When COVID-19 emerged, that groundwork allowed Henry Schein to respond immediately, supporting the White House COVID-19 Supply Chain Task Force and the Strategic National Stockpile rather than developing new systems amid the crisis.

Measuring what matters

Henry Schein has developed a structured approach that combines performance metrics with stakeholder feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of its corporate citizenship efforts.

Henry Schein Cares isn't just a name anymore – it's become an acronym, with every letter standing for a pillar of our work: Catalyzing health care access, Advancing policies and solutions that drive innovation, Relationship building for change, Empowering our Team Schein Members, and Sustaining the planet. Each of the five Henry Schein CARES pillars is supported by its own set of key performance indicators (KPIs), allowing the organization to track progress and hold itself accountable. But Field said one of the most valuable tools is the Company's Corporate Citizenship Barometer, launched in 2023.

The annual stakeholder survey gathers feedback from approximately 16,000 participants, including customers, suppliers, investors, Team Schein Members and community partners. The goal is to understand not only how stakeholders view the company's environmental and social initiatives, but also whether those efforts are influencing others to strengthen their own corporate citizenship.

The findings have provided valuable insight. Customers and suppliers value sustainability, but continue to prioritize their commercial experience with the company. Team Schein Members have expressed interest in more volunteer opportunities, while community partners have recognized the impact of Henry Schein's investments.

"For us, that's a real measure of success," Field said – not simply the company's own impact, but whether it inspires others to create positive change as well.

A mission that hasn't changed

As Henry Schein Cares celebrates its 25th anniversary, Field said the organization's greatest achievement is the consistency of its mission.

"The greatest successes of Henry Schein Cares have been achieved through trusted partnerships with NGOs, governments, nonprofits, industry associations, customers, suppliers and Team Schein Members," Field said. The company's philosophy traces back more than 94 years to its founders Henry and Esther Schein, whose belief that organizations can "do well by doing good" eventually became the foundation for Henry Schein Cares.

Today, that mission is woven throughout the company's culture, encouraging Team Schein members to volunteer in their communities, respond to disasters, promote environmental stewardship and uphold high standards of ethics and integrity. The program's impact reflects that commitment.





Field said the organization's success can be seen in both large-scale initiatives and grassroots employee efforts. Programs such as the We Care Global Challenge have delivered more than 100,000 hygiene kits to Ronald McDonald House Charities, while Team Schein Members have also organized local relief efforts, including assembling hygiene kits for families affected by hurricanes. "We've proved what's possible when you can do well in business and do good for the community when you're treating them as the same goal," Field said. "That's a foundation we want to build from."

From corporate social responsibility to corporate citizenship

Over the past 25 years, the definition of corporate social responsibility has expanded far beyond charitable giving. According to Field, what was once viewed primarily as philanthropy – donating products, writing checks, or supporting community causes – has evolved into a strategic business function that is integrated into how organizations operate and measure success.

"I think it's matured where it's not seen as a side initiative anymore," Field said. "It's now around corporate responsibility

Life-saving lesson

During Henry Schein's We Care Global Challenge, Team Schein Members from HealthFirst combined assembling hygiene kits for Ronald McDonald House Charities with hands-on emergency response training.

The value of that training became clear just days later when a Team Schein Member unexpectedly collapsed. A colleague who had participated in the session immediately called 911, provided assistance, and stayed calm until help arrived.

When asked what made the difference, the team member credited the training held during the We Care Global Challenge. "This helped me stay calm and know what to do."

Field said that story is a powerful reminder that corporate citizenship can have an impact far beyond the communities it serves. Sometimes, the skills gained while giving back can end up saving a life.

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or corporate citizenship and sustainability woven into how a company operates, measures its success and creates shared value for every stakeholder it touches."

The next 25 years

As Henry Schein Cares looks toward its next quarter century, Field said the organization's foundation will remain unchanged.

At the top of the list is prevention. Through its *Prevention Is Power* initiative, Henry Schein Cares plans to deepen its efforts on the connection between oral health and overall health, helping providers and patients better understand how dental care influences conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and Alzheimer's. Field believes greater integration between dental and medical care represents one of the most significant opportunities to improve long-term health outcomes.

Key Takeaways

- Henry Schein Cares celebrates 25 years of expanding access to care, supporting communities and creating lasting impact through partnerships and service.
- The program's disaster response efforts evolved from lessons learned during crises into proactive global supply chain preparedness.
- Corporate citizenship has become embedded in Henry Schein's business strategy, combining social impact, sustainability and stakeholder engagement.
- Future priorities include preventive care, health equity for patients with disabilities and progress toward environmental sustainability goals.

Another priority is expanding access to care for patients with disabilities, a population that has historically faced significant barriers to receiving dental services. Field acknowledges there is no simple solution, but she sees growing momentum as more dental schools incorporate training on treating patients with disabilities. Henry Schein Cares intends to remain engaged for the long term, helping advance awareness, education and access.

The organization's third major focus is environmental sustainability. After establishing science-based emissions reduction targets, Henry Schein is now implementing its net-zero transition plan, with goals that include reducing Scope 1 and Scope 3 emissions through 2030 and achieving 100% renewable electricity sourcing by 2030 while maintaining that commitment through 2050.

For Field, those priorities share a common thread. Whether improving preventive care, advancing health equity, or reducing environmental impact, the goal is to build on the same principles that have guided Henry Schein Cares since its founding.

"I think these priorities reflect what Henry Schein Cares can be in the future and what can be most meaningful in the years ahead on the well-being of people and the planet," she said. rep

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Ready for Respiratory Season?

How to make the most of respiratory season ride days between manufacturer and distributor reps.

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The best ride days are about far more than introducing a manufacturer representative to a customer. They are an opportunity for distributor and manufacturer reps to combine their strengths, learn from one another and deliver greater value to healthcare providers.

For Steve Adubato, Distribution Field Manager Northeast for Abbott Rapid Diagnostics, success begins long before anyone gets in the car. "Preparation is what turns a ride day from a few account visits into a productive field strategy session."

That preparation includes understanding why each customer is on the schedule, the account's current challenges, and the objectives for every call. Adubato said the strongest ride days capitalize on each partner's unique strengths. Distributor reps bring established customer relationships, account history, and local market knowledge, while manufacturer reps contribute product expertise, clinical insights, and competitive perspective. Together, they can have richer conversations focused on solving customer problems rather than simply presenting products.

He also encourages reps to listen for opportunities beyond the immediate sale. "The best calls often come from asking one more thoughtful question instead of rushing to the close," Adubato said. Comments about staffing, workflow, patient flow, or operational challenges often reveal opportunities to bring additional value.

Just as important is what happens after the final customer visit. Adubato said every ride day should end with a clear follow-up plan outlining next steps and responsibilities. That combination of preparation, collaboration, curiosity, and accountability is what transforms a productive day in the field into stronger customer relationships and long-term territory growth.

In the following Ride day series, *Repertoire* explores what separates an average field visit from one that uncovers new opportunities, strengthens customer relationships and drives long-term territory growth.



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1. ID NOW™ Strep A 2 clinical trial data, held on file. **2.** Cohen JF, et al. Rapid antigen detection test for group A streptococcus in children with pharyngitis (Review). Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2016 Jul 4;7(7):CD010502. **3.** ID NOW™ Influenza A & B 2 clinical trial data, held on file.

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Beyond the Transaction

Whether discussing respiratory testing or workflow challenges, the most successful distributor reps use manufacturer partnerships to deliver clinical insight, deepen customer relationships and add real value to the practices they serve.



In today's market, price and product availability still matter, but they are no longer enough to define a great partnership, said Steve Adubato, Distribution Field Manager Northeast, Abbott Rapid Diagnostics.

"Customers expect those fundamentals," he said. "What separates an average partnership from a great one is what happens beyond the transaction."

An average partnership can become transactional quickly. A rep needs a product, a vendor answers a question, an order gets placed, and everyone moves on to the next request.

"That may keep the day moving, but it does not always help the customer solve bigger problems," Adubato said.

A great partnership feels different. It is built on consistent communication, shared goals, trust and a willingness to show up together in the field. The best distributor partners move past the immediate request and ask a longer-range question: What is this practice trying to accomplish, and what would genuinely help them get there? That shift in framing changes the quality of every conversation.

How ride days build stronger territories

The most successful distributor reps view ride days as far more than joint sales calls – they see them as an investment in building a stronger territory. According to Adubato, spending time in the field with manufacturer partners helps reps expand their product knowledge, identify unmet needs and build customer relationships in ways that virtual meetings and product training alone cannot replicate.

"As a manufacturer representative, there is nothing more energizing than working with a distributor rep who is prepared, engaged and curious," Adubato said. "They know the accounts. They understand the personalities. They ask better questions. Most importantly, they want to learn how to bring more value to the customer."

Those ride days benefit everyone involved. Customers see a coordinated team working toward a common goal rather than two separate salespeople making individual calls. Distributor reps gain the confidence and clinical knowledge to continue conversations long after the

manufacturer leaves, while manufacturers gain a firsthand understanding of the competitive pressures, workflow challenges, staffing shortages and operational realities their customers face every day.

For Abbott's ID NOW™ rapid molecular platform, ride days also create an opportunity to move beyond discussing product features and into conversations about testing workflows, respiratory care strategies, and the value of faster diagnostic results for both clinicians and patients.

"The best distributor reps treat every customer interaction as an investment in their territory," Adubato said. "They are not just managing a list of accounts. They are building real relationships."

Meeting the demands of respiratory season

As respiratory season approaches, Adubato sees physician practices looking for more than fast answers. They need diagnostic tools that support confident clinical decisions while improving workflow.

"That context is part of why Abbott's ID NOW™ rapid molecular platform, which offers CLIA-waived molecular testing for COVID-19, Influenza A and B, RSV, and Strep A, has resonated," Adubato said. "The platform combines the speed of a point-of-care test with the accuracy of molecular diagnostics. Providers can receive Strep A results in as little as two to six minutes, allowing diagnosis and treatment decisions to be made while the patient is still in the office."

"The best distributor reps treat every customer interaction as an investment in their territory."

That speed translates into meaningful operational benefits. Specimen handling decreases, lab send-outs and culture confirmations become less necessary, and staff spend less time tracking down results or making follow-up calls. Patients leave the office with answers, a treatment plan when appropriate, and greater confidence in their care, while clinicians gain the reassurance of highly sensitive molecular testing that supports sound treatment decisions and responsible antibiotic stewardship.

When introducing molecular testing to a practice already using rapid tests or sending specimens to a reference lab, Adubato and his distributor partners typically begin with workflow questions rather than product comparisons.

"We work together to understand the practice's workflow, patient volume, staffing challenges and testing needs," he said. "Once you understand those things, the conversation becomes much bigger than any single instrument."

Key Takeaways

- Great supplier partnerships are built on trust, shared goals and proactive collaboration that goes well beyond price and product availability.
- Ride days strengthen territories by giving distributor reps and manufacturer partners opportunities to deepen product knowledge, uncover customer needs and present a unified front to healthcare providers.
- Successful customer conversations focus first on understanding a practice's workflow, staffing challenges and long-term goals, allowing solutions to be tailored to real operational needs rather than simply promoting products.
- During respiratory season, rapid molecular testing can improve both clinical and operational outcomes by delivering fast, accurate results that support timely treatment decisions, streamline workflows and enhance patient care.



How Strategic Partnerships Grow Territories

Collaborative customer visits become far more than field training when manufacturers and distributors align on strategy and combine relationship knowledge with product expertise.

What separates a solid supplier relationship from one that actually moves the needle in today's marketplace?

For René Favela, Account Manager at Sekisui Diagnostics, the answer goes beyond communication and coordination. Those are table stakes. The real difference shows up in how intentional – and strategic – a partnership becomes once both sides are fully engaged in each other's day-to-day realities.

Indeed, when distributor reps commit ride days, the impact compounds. It's not just about product knowledge or checking a box on field activity. It becomes a visible demonstration of value to customers. As Favela puts it, "your customers will see that you're trying to bring value to them." Over time, customers begin to see the rep less as an order-taker and more as a resource tied to better clinical and operational outcomes.

Building a "growth-oriented territory"

That shift is especially important in today's environment, where relationships drive access and influence. Reps who consistently show up in these joint field settings are better positioned to build what Favela calls a "growth-oriented territory." They are no longer operating in isolation, but reinforcing credibility through a blend of relationship insight and product expertise.

In practice, that combination changes how customers perceive them. They're no longer just transactional contacts who "bring in a product every now and then," but partners who can explain the "meaning behind it" – why a solution matters clinically, how it fits workflow, and what improvement might look like. That context builds trust, and trust creates opportunity.

But Favela is clear: ride days only work when they're intentional. "If you approach it with intention and a clear plan, that's when you get the best outcomes," he says. Alignment on goals, target accounts and opportunities before entering a facility turns the day from shadowing into strategy.

Preparation also matters. Both reps benefit from pre-call research that surfaces angles neither might see alone. "Sometimes you don't always know what you think you know," he notes, highlighting the value of shared perspective.

During the visit, success depends on presenting a unified front. Customers should see one coordinated team, not competing voices. "We've got to leverage the distribution rep's relationship and leverage my product expertise," Favela says.

Finally, follow-up is where momentum is won or lost. Revisiting the call, refining the approach, and re-engaging quickly keeps energy alive. "That momentum is so precious," he

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says, underscoring that sustained execution is what turns strong ride days into long-term territory growth.

Turning simple tests into smarter conversations

For Favela, one the most compelling parts of Sekisui Diagnostics' product portfolio is it's practicality.

While many manufacturers offer respiratory testing solutions, Favela says he gets especially energized by products that solve very real, everyday problems for customers. Even something as routine as a strep test becomes strategically important when it removes friction from a clinic's workflow.

"Our strep product has QC inside," he explains. For high-volume settings like urgent care centers or integrated delivery networks, that detail matters. It eliminates the need for separate control purchases, simplifies compliance and reduces administrative burden.

That consolidation is central to how Favela approaches the value proposition. Rather than positioning the product as just another diagnostic tool, he frames it as a way to streamline operations. "You're solving problems for them. You're consolidating their purchases," he says. In addition to built-in controls, each kit also includes extra tests, ensuring that customers are getting full utilization of what they pay for without hidden inefficiencies.

In competitive conversations, Favela leans heavily into that simplicity and transparency. "I will leave you a kit and you try it out," he often tells customers. His approach is intentionally hands-on – inviting comparison testing against competitors or existing systems. The goal is not persuasion through claims, but validation through experience.

That confidence stems from what he sees as measurable advantages: fewer additional purchases, fewer wasted kits, and predictable test utilization. If a kit is labeled that it contains 25 tests, he emphasizes, customers will actually get 25 usable patient tests – no hidden loss from controls or inefficiencies.

But Favela's pitch doesn't stop at strep testing. The same value structure applies across flu and combo respiratory panels, where flexibility becomes a key differentiator. Some customers prefer separate COVID and flu testing pathways, while others want the efficiency of a single swab that delivers multiple results at once.

That variability is why Favela leans into discovery-based selling. "What's important to them? How do they like testing?" he asks. His process starts with understanding workflow preferences, pain points and operational constraints before ever introducing a product solution.

From there, the conversation becomes less about pushing a specific test and more about aligning with clinical reality. "What are your concerns? What are any issues that you're currently facing?" he says. Those questions guide how he positions each product, ensuring that recommendations are grounded in actual need rather than assumption.

Key Takeaways

- Intentional ride days create stronger partnerships by combining distributor relationships with manufacturer expertise to deliver greater value for customers and uncover new growth opportunities.
- Preparation and follow-up are just as important as the customer visit, ensuring joint calls are strategic, coordinated and translated into long-term territory development.
- Successful selling begins with understanding customer workflows and challenges, allowing product recommendations to address operational and clinical needs rather than simply promoting a solution.
- Practical product features that reduce complexity, such as built-in quality controls and streamlined testing processes, can improve efficiency, lower costs and strengthen the overall value proposition for healthcare providers.

Winning Respiratory Season Together

From joint customer visits to fast, affordable diagnostic testing, CorDx shares how manufacturers and distributor reps can strengthen partnerships while helping providers prepare for seasonal surges.

As healthcare providers prepare for another busy respiratory season, strong collaboration between manufacturers and distributors can make the difference between simply supplying products and delivering meaningful customer support. From sharing market intelligence to identifying customer needs and responding quickly to changing demand, successful partnerships help ensure providers have the right solutions when they need them most.

For CorDx, that collaboration starts with communication. "Great partnerships are built on clear, candid communication," said Jerrold Loo, noting that distributor sales reps provide invaluable frontline insights into customer challenges, pricing concerns and market trends.

Leon Xie agreed, adding that the strongest relationships go well beyond coordination. "A great partnership means we truly operate as one team," he said. "When manufacturers and distributors work together that way, we create more value for customers than either could alone."

Ride days strengthen relationships

For distributor sales reps, ride days



with manufacturer partners are more than joint sales calls – they're an investment in stronger customer relationships and long-term growth. By combining product expertise with established customer relationships, both partners can uncover new opportunities while reinforcing their commitment to customer success.

"Distributor reps who consistently invest in ride days build relationships based on trust, partnership and long-term growth," said Xie. "The strongest relationships are created when distributors and manufacturers combine their expertise to deliver greater value for customers."

CorDx's Raul Falcon has seen those benefits firsthand. During ride days with urgent care customers, he said having both the distributor and manufacturer present sends a powerful message that the customer has the full support of both organizations. Those visits also create opportunities for candid customer feedback, helping strengthen confidence in CorDx products while deepening trust between distributor reps and their accounts.

To get the most from a ride day, preparation is essential. Xie encouraged reps to arrive with "an open mind and a willingness to learn." Observing different styles, expanding product knowledge and seeing customer interactions from another perspective helps both manufacturer and distributor reps become more effective partners – and ultimately deliver greater value to customers.

Rapid diagnostics help providers prepare for respiratory season

As respiratory viruses begin circulating each fall, healthcare providers need diagnostic tools that deliver fast, accurate answers while keeping testing simple for both clinicians and patients. CorDx is focused on helping physician offices, urgent care centers and other outpatient settings quickly identify common respiratory infections with easy-to-use rapid tests.

"Our biggest focus is our 3-in-1 COVID/Flu A/Flu B rapid test," said Loo. "With a single swab, clinicians can detect and differentiate three of the most common respiratory viruses." Because many respiratory illnesses present with similar symptoms, quickly distinguishing between COVID-19 and influenza can help providers make timely treatment decisions and select the most appropriate therapy.

Xie also pointed to CorDx's RSV rapid test, which uses a shallow anterior nasal swab rather than the more invasive nasopharyngeal swab required by many traditional RSV tests. The result is a more comfortable experience for patients and an easier sample collection process for clinicians.

Beyond speed and convenience, Loo said today's rapid diagnostics reflect a broader shift in healthcare. "The pandemic permanently changed how we think about respiratory illnesses," he said. CorDx's rapid tests provide affordable, point-of-care results without the need for complex laboratory equipment, while the company's combination COVID/Flu A/Flu B test requires just one anterior nasal swab to identify three of the most common respiratory viruses – improving efficiency for clinicians and creating a better patient experience.

Meeting the evolving needs of physician practices

The expectations for point-of-care diagnostics have changed significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Physician offices and urgent care centers are looking for testing solutions that fit seamlessly into busy clinical workflows while delivering timely, reliable results.

According to Loo, providers continue to prioritize rapid tests that are both practical and economical. Easy-to-use diagnostics eliminate the need for costly capital equipment while allowing clinicians to quickly identify common respiratory illnesses and make informed treatment decisions. As healthcare organizations continue to balance quality care with operational efficiency, rapid point-of-care testing has become an increasingly important part of respiratory season preparedness.

Looking ahead, Loo said simplicity and accessibility will continue to drive adoption. "Healthcare providers are looking for diagnostic solutions that are fast, affordable and easy to use. Our rapid tests deliver results quickly without requiring expensive capital equipment. They're cost-effective and simple to implement, making them well suited for physician offices and urgent care settings."

Key Takeaways

- Strong manufacturer-distributor partnerships begin with open communication and shared market insights, helping providers receive the right products and support when respiratory season demand increases.
- Rapid, easy-to-use point-of-care diagnostics that deliver accurate results without complex laboratory equipment help physician practices improve workflow efficiency and make timely treatment decisions during respiratory season.
- Joint customer visits strengthen relationships, improve product knowledge and create valuable feedback that benefits customers and both sales teams.
- Manufacturers and distributors who align their expertise and work collaboratively provide better customer support and drive stronger long-term results.

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Why Patient Outcomes Drive PHASE Scientific's Jessica Cloonen

A personal connection to antibiotic resistance shapes how PHASE Scientific's Jessica Cloonen partners with distributors and clinicians.

When Jessica Cloonen, Senior Account Executive at PHASE Scientific, talks with healthcare providers about antibiotic stewardship and the company's FebriDx® test, she isn't simply discussing a product. The topic is personal.

Her father, who lives with chronic kidney disease and the threat of recurring bacterial infections, faces a future where treatment options continue to narrow as antibiotic resistance grows. That reality has transformed routine sales calls into something far deeper.

"It's truly about impacting patient care," Cloonen said.

That perspective reflects what author Lisa Earle McLeod describes as a "noble selling purpose," the idea that the most effective sales professionals connect their work to a larger mission. For Cloonen, that mission is helping clinicians make more informed treatment decisions and reducing the unnecessary use of antibiotics that fuels antimicrobial resistance.



Jessica Cloonen

The statistics are sobering. Millions of antibiotic-resistant infections occur each year in the United States, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths.

As antibiotic-resistant infections continue to rise worldwide, Cloonen's story serves as a reminder that behind every healthcare product is a patient, a family and a reason for caring. As Cloonen puts it, "I knew that this was how I was going to use the selling experience I had where I could do a greater service."

Focus on patient outcomes

Cloonen believes successful manufacturer-distributor relationships begin with three essentials:

"First and foremost, we need trust, respect and an agreed-upon purpose that moves past closing a deal," she said. "It should be fully encompassed around patient outcomes and helping our customers achieve those goals."

That shared mission becomes especially important during ride days, which Cloonen views as one of the most effective ways to strengthen partnerships and deliver value to healthcare customers.

She describes distributor representatives as trusted consultants who understand their customers' businesses and challenges better than anyone else. Because of those relationships, they are uniquely positioned to introduce manufacturers whose products, expertise and insights can help providers improve care.

"They have the ability to be stewards of innovation, stewards of best practices, and stewards of evolving healthcare," she said.

Cloonen believes successful ride days require preparation and flexibility. Before heading into the field, she prefers to establish

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clear objectives and define what success will look like. But just as important is the ability to listen and adapt.

"We need to understand the customer and not just hear through the lens of what we want to offer," she said. "It's about understanding their challenges and solving for the right solutions."

At the forefront of antibiotic stewardship

As respiratory season brings an influx of patients with coughs, sore throats and other acute respiratory symptoms, PHASE Scientific is focused on helping clinicians make more informed treatment decisions.

The company's primary focus is FebriDx®, a rapid point-of-care test designed to help differentiate bacterial infection from non-bacterial etiology for acute respiratory infections. The test supports one of healthcare's most pressing priorities: antibiotic stewardship.

"We know that antimicrobial resistance is on the rise, and we're combating antibiotic resistance with FebriDx®," said Cloonen.

The need is significant. Antibiotic-resistant infections are responsible for millions of complications and tens of thousands of deaths each year in the United States. Healthcare leaders worldwide have warned that the problem will continue to worsen unless prescribing practices change.

"It is a silent epidemic that is catching up," says Cloonen. "If we do not change how our prescribing behaviors are today, specifically around our outpatient clinics, and furthermore how we steward those antibiotics, we're going to continue to face growing challenges."

Every year in the U.S., millions of antibiotic prescriptions are written for acute respiratory infections that aren't bacterial. Differentiating bacterial infection from non-bacterial etiology can be challenging due to an overlap in signs and symptoms. The majority of acute respiratory infections are caused by viruses, Cloonen explained, making antibiotics unnecessary in many cases. Knowing whether a patient has a bacterial infection has a direct impact on reducing unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions. Cloonen said FebriDx® is changing how frontline providers approach acute respiratory infection care across point-of-care settings by accurately differentiating bacterial infection from non-bacterial etiology after 10 minutes from a fingerstick sample, supporting both stewardship efforts and patient education in real time.

Key Takeaways

- The strongest manufacturer-distributor partnerships are built around improving care, not simply closing sales.
- Connecting your work to a meaningful mission builds trust and creates greater value for customers and patients.
- Clear goals, flexibility and a focus on customer challenges lead to better solutions and stronger partnerships.
- FebriDx® helps clinicians distinguish bacterial from non-bacterial infections, reducing unnecessary antibiotic use and improving treatment decisions.

Complementing clinical judgment

FebriDx® reduces diagnostic uncertainty whilst maintaining patient flow. The fingerstick blood test delivers results after 10 minutes and helps clinicians determine whether a patient's immune response is more consistent with a bacterial or non-bacterial infection. FebriDx® confidently rules out a bacterial infection with 99% negative predictive value whilst ensuring bacterial infections are not overlooked. One feature that resonates with providers is the test's visual readout. Similar to a pregnancy test, FebriDx® displays lines indicating a bacterial infection or non-bacterial etiology, allowing clinicians to share the results directly with patients and improve confidence in treatment recommendations.

"It becomes a patient experience conversation," said Cloonen.

Winning Together in the Field

Ride days are most effective when manufacturer and distributor reps prepare together, align on strategy and approach every customer visit as one unified team.

Ride days between distributor and manufacturer sales reps have long been a staple of the medical distribution industry. But according to Anne McCarthy, Senior Regional Sales Director at QuidelOrtho, the real value isn't simply spending time together in the field. Rather, the real value comes from building intentional partnerships that create opportunities neither side could develop alone.

"Ride days = endless potential," McCarthy said. "But beware – finding trusted partners isn't easy. It's a marathon of hard work and dedication."

She believes the strongest partnerships are built on trust, shared work ethic and a commitment to planning before ever walking into a customer account. "Deliberate planning before the ride day creates better opportunities. Stronger opportunities close faster," she said. "When opportunities close, and we win together, it's electric and contagious."

For distributor reps, the payoff extends far beyond a single sales call. By aligning with the right manufacturer partners, focusing on shared priorities and approaching customer visits as consultants rather than vendors, ride days can become a catalyst for stronger relationships, larger opportunities and sustained territory growth.



Well prepared, professionally executed

What differentiates in today's market isn't always the products, McCarthy said. "It's the hard work, the dedication, the partnership and the in-person meeting that is well prepared for and professionally executed."

She draws a clear distinction between an average partnership and a great one. An average partnership communicates regularly, solves customer problems together and understands each other's goals. A great partnership, however, operates as a unified team.

"Great means we can finish each other's sentences because we have already invested in each other's success," McCarthy said. "We forget what company we work for because we are THE team."

That level of collaboration starts long before a customer meeting. The strongest partnerships align on strategy in advance, define the desired outcome and enter every call with a shared game plan. According to McCarthy, that's where manufacturer and distributor reps move beyond simply working together – and begin consistently winning together.

The most productive ride days don't happen by chance. McCarthy recommends approaching every field visit with a clear strategy, while remaining flexible enough to adjust when plans change.

"Have a plan A and a plan B. Be flexible, organized and prepared," she said. But she also encourages reps to make time for relationship-building outside of business discussions. Whether it's sharing a bad dad joke, snapping a selfie with a customer or grabbing a drink after the day's calls, those moments help strengthen the partnership.

Equally important is what happens after the last appointment. Reviewing what worked, identifying areas for improvement and agreeing on next steps ensures momentum continues long after the ride day ends. "The ride day is critical," McCarthy said, "but what you do before and after to enhance that effort makes all the difference."

Matching the right test to the right patient

McCarthy said respiratory season conversations with customers must shift away from choosing a single testing platform and toward building a testing strategy that fits each practice's workflow and patient population.

Rather than focusing exclusively on price or technology, she encourages any physician office, hospital or IDN to consider a full spectrum of diagnostic options – from CLIA-waived molecular testing to instrumented rapid testing and visually read antigen tests – and determine which solution is best for each clinical scenario.

"This is the year of pairing the right tool to the type of patient and considering seasonal and non-seasonal algorithms," McCarthy said. "Linear focus on cost or technology type is out; patient satisfaction with dynamic and strategic execution is in."

Even with compelling technology, however, McCarthy says the biggest hurdle isn't the product – it's change itself. One of the most common objections she hears is, "I have too much going on right now to make a change, even though I know I probably should."

That's where strong manufacturer-distributor partnerships become especially valuable. Rather than simply promoting a product, both parties can help customers navigate implementation, training and workflow changes that reduce disruption. "Customers are exhausted and lack many of the resources they need to fire on all cylinders," McCarthy said. "The stickiest, fastest and most productive sale is where the manufacturer, the distributor and the customer support each other."

"The stickiest, fastest and most productive sale is where the manufacturer, the distributor and the customer support each other."

For McCarthy, that's the real opportunity this respiratory season: delivering not just a diagnostic test, but a partnership that makes it easier for customers to provide the right care at the right time.

Key Takeaways

- Build ride day success through trust, shared planning and aligned goals before customer visits.
- Great manufacturer-distributor partnerships operate as one team, driving faster wins and stronger customer relationships.
- Maximize every ride day with preparation, flexibility and post-call follow-up to sustain momentum.
- Focus respiratory conversations on matching the right diagnostic solution to each patient and supporting implementation, not just selling a product.

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Addressing Today's Respiratory Testing Challenges

Cepheid's Jenean Harris discusses evolving customer needs, reimbursement considerations and the testing strategies that can help providers prepare for the months ahead.

Before respiratory season ramps up, distributor sales reps have an opportunity to help customers prepare with the right testing solutions – and the right conversations. According to Jenean Harris, Senior Territory Sales Executive for Cepheid, success starts with strong manufacturer-distributor partnerships built on communication, collaboration and thoughtful pre-call planning.

"The best partnerships are the ones where we're in constant communication," Harris said. "Those reps become so knowledgeable about the product that they're often able to address customer questions without me even being there."

Strong partnerships drive stronger results

Harris said the need for knowledgeable distributor representatives and strong manufacturer partnerships has never been greater.

"COVID changed everything," Harris said. "During the pandemic, customers wanted any respiratory testing product they could get. Now many organizations are saturated with products and information, and some are experiencing respiratory fatigue."

That shift has changed sales conversations, but not the importance of respiratory testing. Harris said that even when treatments aren't available for certain illnesses, such as RSV, identifying infected patients can help protect vulnerable populations, including infants and older adults.

Helping customers navigate those conversations starts with communication between manufacturers and distributor partners.

"The best partnerships are the ones where we're in constant communication," Harris said. "Those reps become so knowledgeable about the product that they're often able to address customer questions without me even being there."

Harris believes ride days remain one of the most effective ways to strengthen those relationships. She recalled working with a relatively new distributor representative who had limited experience with Cepheid's portfolio. After spending two days

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danaher

together visiting customers, they secured placements at five accounts.

"For me, that really demonstrated the value of working together in the field," Harris said. "When manufacturers and distributors collaborate, everyone benefits – including the customer."

The right balance

As respiratory season approaches, Harris said customer conversations increasingly center on balancing clinical performance with reimbursement realities. Cepheid's respiratory testing menu is designed to provide flexibility while helping clinicians make informed decisions quickly.

One of the company's key offerings is its 4-Plex multiplex assay, which allows providers to detect COVID-19, influenza A, influenza B and RSV from a single swab. Because these respiratory illnesses often present with similar symptoms, multiplex testing can help clinicians identify the cause of infection without requiring multiple tests.

At the same time, Harris recognizes that reimbursement considerations have changed the conversation. Some providers have shifted away from multiplex testing because of concerns about payment. To address those needs, Cepheid also offers singleplex test cartridges, giving customers the flexibility to select the testing approach that best fits their clinical and financial requirements.

Another topic Harris expects to discuss this respiratory season is the expiration of the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) pathway. While some manufacturers are still navigating that transition, she notes that Cepheid's respiratory assays already have FDA 510(k) clearance.

When evaluating respiratory testing platforms, Harris encourages customers to look beyond a manufacturer's advertised turnaround time. She says the entire workflow – including specimen preparation and hands-on time – should be considered. With Cepheid, users simply collect the swab, place it into the cartridge and load it into the instrument. Harris also points to the platform's multiple detection targets, which help identify emerging viral variants and reduce the likelihood of false negatives, particularly for influenza B, providing confidence in test results as viruses continue to evolve.

Key Takeaways

- Strong manufacturer-distributor communication and ride days build product knowledge and drive measurable sales results.
- Respiratory testing remains critical despite post-COVID fatigue, especially for protecting vulnerable patients through accurate diagnosis.
- Providers should balance reimbursement, workflow and performance when choosing between multiplex and singleplex testing.
- Year-round diagnostic menus help healthcare providers maximize instrument value beyond respiratory season.

Harris says that broader menu "allows providers to maximize the value of their investment while supporting patient care across multiple disease states throughout the year."

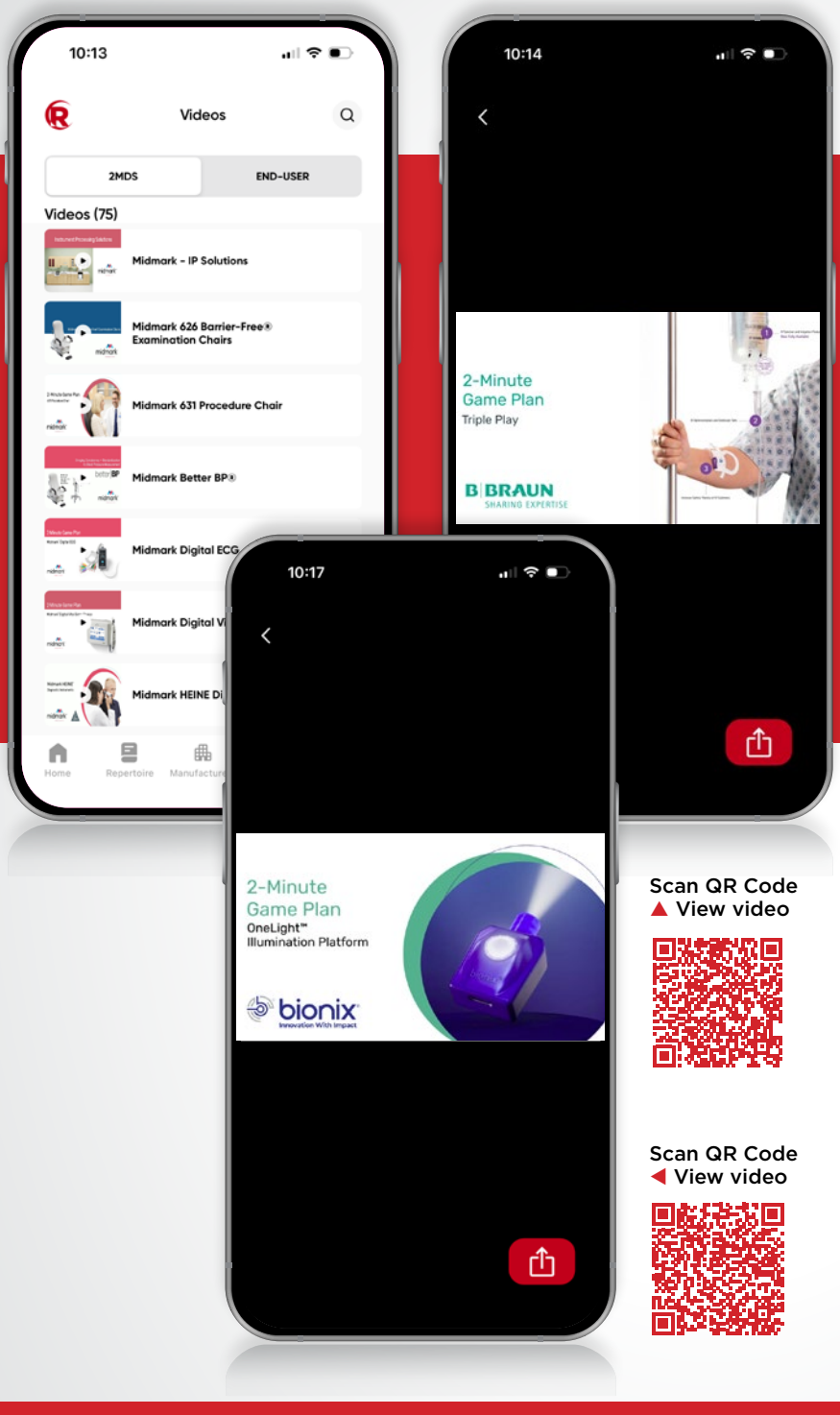
Looking beyond respiratory season

While respiratory testing is a seasonal priority, Harris encourages healthcare providers to think about how a diagnostic platform can deliver value year-round.

"Respiratory season only lasts part of the year," she said. "Healthcare providers should also consider how an instrument can add value during the rest of the year."

In addition to its respiratory testing portfolio, Cepheid's CLIA-waived menu includes assays such as its MVP panel, hepatitis C, Strep A and mpox. Harris says that broader menu "allows providers to maximize the value of their investment while supporting patient care across multiple disease states throughout the year." rep

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Respiratory Season Rhythms

As RSV, flu, and COVID patterns stabilize post-pandemic, physicians face a new challenge: patients who are more skeptical of vaccines than ever.

Nearly six years have passed since the pandemic first emerged, and disease trends for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), COVID-19 and influenza have varied considerably each respiratory season since.

In most regions of the U.S., RSV season typically starts during the fall and peaks in the winter, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). RSV circulation was temporarily disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic; and during 2020, RSV circulated at historically low levels.

"The most prominent shift in pattern post-pandemic was in RSV where there were several outbreaks that occurred in 2022-23 during the summer," said Tina Q. Tan, MD, a professor of pediatrics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and an infectious-disease physician at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago. "The pattern has now gone mostly back to normal with the season occurring in the late fall, winter and early spring in most of the U.S."

The peak percentage of positive RSV test results was higher in 2022-23 than rates documented in previous years, suggesting a higher intensity of circulation that year. Recent RSV data from the National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS), however, predicts a return to pre-pandemic RSV circulation for the 2026 respiratory season.

On the other hand, influenza circulation was particularly low in 2020, as lockdown and travel-related quarantines were imposed globally. Influenza started to resurge in late 2021, and in the first half of 2022, seasonal patterns had not returned to normal, with unusually late and protracted influenza seasons in the Northern Hemisphere.

"Influenza has largely remained a disease in the late fall and winter months with Influenza B occurring in the late winter and early spring months after Influenza A outbreaks," said Dr. Tan. "COVID has also remained a year-round disease with the highest rates occurring in the late fall, winter and summer months."

Preparing for a busy respiratory season

Although disease trends have begun to normalize post-pandemic, physicians now face additional challenges related to managing respiratory season.

According to Dr. Tan, an increase in 'vaccine fatigue'– inaction towards vaccine information or instruction due to perceived burden and burnout – has resulted in physicians spending more time than before explaining the benefits of vaccines to their patients.

"Healthcare staff should plan for more patient questions in the upcoming respiratory season," said Dr. Tan. "Vaccine fatigue and the massive increase in vaccine hesitancy, as a result of misinformation from government health organizations and on social media, has caused so much confusion that there have been many more patients who are questioning the need for vaccines."

Vaccine fatigue has also changed patient-provider conversations within primary care offices.

"Primary care providers are dedicated to providing the best care for their patients," said Dr. Tan. "Vaccine hesitancy has significantly increased time spent speaking with patients about why receiving vaccinations are important."

To address vaccine-related concerns and hesitancy with patients, Dr. Tan says that there are two well-known approaches to providing proper vaccine messaging – the CDC SHARE Approach and the AAP Presumptive Approach – which provide patients with information on why a vaccine is important to receive based on several risk factors.

Using these methods, physicians explain the major benefits of vaccines, emphasizing the positive experiences they have had personally when using vaccines to protect their patients.

"You want to remind parents that vaccines help protect their child and everyone in the family," said Dr. Tan. "Be sure to highlight the benefits of vaccination against the disease, and explain the possible potential serious complications, financial costs and spread of the disease to more vulnerable family members if a child, parent of other family member gets these natural diseases."

Dr. Tan says the most important thing with both approaches is "making an effort to ask parents and patients what their questions are regarding vaccines, listen emphatically and address any concerns by providing scientifically sound information."

Before this year's respiratory season is in full force, Dr. Tan says physician practices should take extra care to order sufficient supplies of RSV, influenza, COVID-19 and pertussis vaccines to cover every patient in the practice. "Physician's offices should also develop a plan on how to separate sick patients from all other patients in the waiting room to prevent the spread of disease, and be sure to take the time needed to discuss the importance of vaccination with each patient."

"Vaccine hesitancy has significantly increased time spent speaking with patients about why receiving vaccinations are important."

Key Takeaways

Influenza, COVID-19 and RSV rates are starting to return to normal after years of post-pandemic fluctuation. Providers can address emerging respiratory season challenges by:

1. Listening empathetically to patient concerns and providing them with science-based information.
2. Taking extra care to order sufficient vaccines for everyone in the practice during respiratory season.
3. Ensuring there is enough time to address any questions about preventative vaccines with each patient.

Bridging the Gap in Hand Hygiene



At a recent CloroxPurell APIC26 Symposium, infection preventionists and nursing leaders confronted a glaring healthcare paradox. Direct observation audits report compliance rates upwards of 97%, yet automated systems capture a far lower reality—often starting near 32%. Panelists Kim Atribin, Tim Bowers, and Edmund Perez explored why sustaining compliance remains difficult.

Understanding where clinical teams struggle, and how distributor reps can help, is key to positioning dispenser technology, automated monitoring systems, and consumables as essential safety solutions.

Gap No. 1: Observation Bias vs. Real-World Task Overload

Manual "direct observation" audits create false security. Clinicians adjust behavior when observed, reporting 97%+ compliance. In reality, a 31-bed hospital unit logs over 150,000 room entries/exits monthly. Dozens of hourly hand hygiene moments cause workflow fatigue and "practice drift."

Potential Solution: Automated Monitoring Systems & Electronic Data Tracking. Reps should present automated dispensing and monitoring technology tracking entry/exit compliance electronically. This provides leaders with unbiased, 24/7 data to

identify specific shifts or units needing targeted support.

Gap No. 2: Operational and Environmental Supply Chain Barriers

Clinicians miss hand hygiene when dispensers are empty, broken, unreachable, or poorly placed relative to workflow. Furthermore, staff spend excessive time running in and out of rooms for single tasks, inflating opportunities.

Potential Solution: Standardized Hardware Placement, Reliable Refill Systems & Task Bundling. Distributor reps can conduct facility walk-throughs to audit dispenser placement, evaluate refill speed, and ensure units never run out of product. Additionally, reps can advise clinical managers on task-bundling tools that naturally reduce unnecessary room entries.

Gap No. 3: "Flywheel of Death" Campaigns and Isolated IP Ownership

Health systems fall into a costly cycle of running short-lived awareness campaigns, seeing brief compliance spikes, and watching rates drift back down. Infection Preventionists are often expected to single-handedly drive behavior without authority over bedside staff.

Potential Solution: Integrated Safety Bundles & Unit-Level Ownership Tools. Help customers integrate hand hygiene directly into protocols — such as CLABSI central line bundles and bedside shift reporting. Sales reps can equip nurse managers with standardized huddle reporting tools and coaching materials that transfer ownership back to frontline champions.

By uncovering hidden operational gaps, streamlining product availability, and helping nurse leaders embed hand hygiene into routine clinical workflows, distributor sales reps can position themselves as indispensable partners in patient safety. ■

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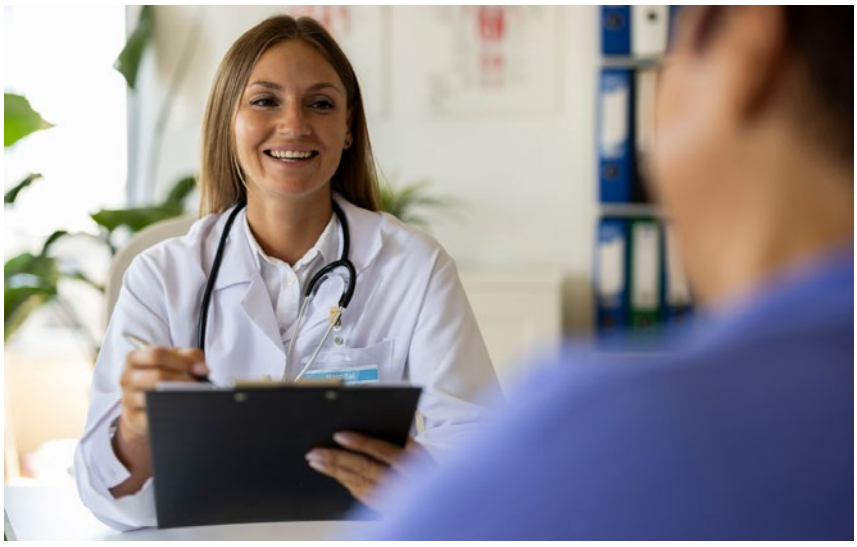
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Patient-Centered Behavioral Health Integration

UCHealth's approach to patient-centered behavioral health and primary care.

By Jenna Hughes

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Mental health is closely linked to physical health – in fact, mental health conditions such as depression increase the risk for many types of chronic conditions including diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Comparably, the presence of chronic conditions can increase the risk for developing a mental health condition, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"The silos of 'medical' vs 'psychiatric or mental' health are truly artificial ones – human organisms are fully integrated," said Hilja R. Ruegg, MD, Program Director of Family Medicine/Psychiatry Combined Training Program and Medical Director of Integrated Mental Health Care at UCHealth. "All aspects of health and well-being interact with one another, contributing to the human experience."

Despite the role mental health plays in our overall well-being, traditional referral-based behavioral healthcare models are frequently fraught with long wait times and a general lack of care coordination between primary care and mental health care, leading to care fragmentation.

Dr. Megan A. Rock, PsyD, a licensed clinical psychologist and Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychiatry & Behavioral Neuroscience at UCHealth, says that the integration of mental health care within primary care fundamentally increases patient access to care.

"Integrated mental health services can support medical treatment plans and increase self-efficacy for a wide range of chronic medical conditions," said Dr. Rock. "A central feature of integrated care is the screening of patients for depression at their general primary care visit."

There are several different mental health care integration models used within primary care settings. Most models target patients in mild to moderate mental health distress and provide them with brief interventions using measurement-based outcomes to track improvement. Other models provide evidence-based treatment options including therapy, medication and more for psychiatric conditions such as depression, anxiety or substance use.

"Through these models, patient-centered care includes

physical health, mental health and the connection between the two," said Dr. Rock. "From setting treatment goals to tracking patient symptoms and outcomes, the mental health service delivered is fully integrated into the primary care treatment plan. It champions the mind-body connection and contributes to both mental health and primary care goals."

Primary care's integration with behavioral health includes increasing adherence to health care, such as following up with medical appointments, managing medications effectively, and improving health behaviors like drinking more water, eating balanced and nutritious meals and improving sleep hygiene.

"With increased understanding of psychiatric illness, we are recognizing and learning about the interplay between the biological, environmental and behavioral drivers," said Dr. Ruegg. "This includes the development of these illnesses and how they play out over a lifetime, akin to how we conceptualize medical conditions – from chronic illnesses to cancers."

Integrating care

At UCHealth's primary care clinics, patients with behavioral health needs get connected to care directly through their primary care provider – physicians can either consult directly with experts at UCHealth University of Colorado Hospital, or patients can be referred for appointments through Virtual Visits with a psychiatrist.

Dr. Ruegg said that the foundational elements of successful integrated care delivery include effectively sharing clinical space, support staff, and a unified electronic health record (EHR) system. Familiar with the important connection between behavioral health and well-being, Dr. Ruegg herself heads up a combined Family Medicine/Psychiatry training program.

As the new generation of physicians enters the field with ever-expanding, nuanced knowledge, she says that the complexity of disease demands physicians who are trained to think and care for individuals in wholistic ways.

"Our combined training program is doing that," said Dr. Ruegg. "We are one of six combined Family Medicine/Psychiatry programs, joining a small number of Internal Medicine/Psychiatry and Pediatric/Psychiatry/Child and Adolescent Psychiatry programs that train physicians to be those kinds of leaders."

Dr. Ruegg said there is currently a critical need for healthcare leaders who possess not only deep expertise in diagnosis and treatment, but also a sophisticated understanding of how care silos intersect and how to deliver more coordinated, patient-centered care.

"Many within the younger generation are entering medicine with a broader appreciation for the connection between behavioral and physical health and a greater comfort with interdisciplinary, team-based approaches to patient care," said Dr. Ruegg. "For many early-career physicians, behavioral health integration is viewed not as an adjunct to care, but as a fundamental component of delivering comprehensive, patient-centered treatment." rep

Key Takeaways

- Traditional referral-based behavioral healthcare models are often characterized by long waits and fragmented care.
- Integrated mental health services can support medical treatment plans and increase self-efficacy for a wide range of chronic medical conditions.
- The foundational elements of successful integrated care delivery include effectively sharing clinical space, support staff and a unified electronic health record (EHR) system.
- Early-career physicians have started to view behavioral health integration as a fundamental component of delivering patient-centered treatment.

Coordinating Behavioral Care

How WellSpan Health's integrated behavioral health and primary care model improves the patient experience.

Listen to this article, scan the QR Code.



The younger generation of medical professionals is considerably more engaged in addressing behavioral health concerns than those that came before, said Ken Rogers, MD, Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for WellSpan Health's Behavioral Health Services. "This has caused a significant shift in the way healthcare is delivered," he said. "There is now a greater understanding of this interface in primary care offices as well, compared to past generations."

The integration of behavioral health within primary care is a current strategic focus for WellSpan Health. The health system has taken a highly personalized approach to care by fully considering each patient's physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being during primary care appointments.

"If physicians recognize that primary care is usually the first touchpoint for identifying a mental health concern, we can then incorporate behavioral health treatment when it's necessary, and we're doing that at WellSpan in a couple of different ways," said Brian Pollak, MD, FACP, Doctor of Internal Medicine for WellSpan Health. "Currently, in primary care, we already screen for depression once a year."

WellSpan Health's integrated behavioral health model began as a pilot in 2014 with behavioral health trainees being included directly within the day-to-day workflow of the primary care practice. If a physician had a patient in the office experiencing a mental health concern, they could speak directly with an onsite behaviorist. This cohabitation lasted for a few years, but according to Dr. Pollak, eventually WellSpan chose to modify the model to create what exists today.

Screening as a starting point

In WellSpan's current model, patients begin their primary care appointment by completing a Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) screening (a standard screening tool used by physicians to determine the severity of mental health concerns), along with other check-in questions, before their visit.

"A lot of mental health issues first appear in primary care, and primary care doctors are trained in and familiar with evaluating and managing anxiety and depression," said Dr. Pollak. "Primary care physicians are often comfortable working with a certain group of medications, and then, if needed, we will typically ask for further support from behavioral health specialists, psychiatrists or counselors."

If a patient does not complete a PHQ during check-in, then WellSpan's clinical staff will ask the patient to complete the PHQ-2 during their appointment time and then will expand it to the PHQ-9, should the patient's PHQ-2 scores be positive.

"Dr. Rogers and I have been involved in building out more of what we call 'decision support' for primary care – if a patient's PHQ-9 score is positive, there is



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a prompt within the electronic health record (EHR) that says, 'Hey, take a look, this person's experiencing a moderate degree of depression,'" said Dr. Pollak. "This indicates to the clinical staff that they need to address the patients' concern further. We're trying to make this process much easier for the provider and also present them with a quick buffet of treatment options to develop more coordinated care."

For patients requiring mental health treatment, finding an appropriate care plan can be notoriously difficult and confusing, with a behavioral health system that can often be a challenge to navigate.

WellSpan Health's model aims to address these barriers for patients. Once an appointment with a primary care physician is complete, each patient is presented with a 'SmartSet' within the EHR, which groups all appointment follow-up information including medication orders, referrals and guidance on when further referrals would be appropriate – all in one user-friendly space.

Another way the health system simplified behavioral health treatment was by carefully evaluating provider referral processes. Primary care providers can now make direct referrals to behavioral health, expediting the patients' process of receiving follow-up care and reducing wait times.

"The length of time between the referral being made and the appointment occurring can be lengthy – in most health systems, there is probably a month or so between somebody identifying a symptom and them getting into care," said Dr. Rogers.

Primary care providers can now make direct referrals to behavioral health, expediting the patients' process of receiving follow-up care and reducing wait times.

Instead, patient referrals now go directly into a queue within WellSpan's EHR, where primary care staff facilitate referral processes to get patients in contact with behavioral health professionals, and access to treatment options including support services like one-on-one therapy, peer support groups and medication sooner.

"Without someone to help you navigate what your real needs are, that can become very, very difficult," said Dr. Rogers. "A large part of what we're trying to do at WellSpan is to figure out how to really help folks navigate the complexity of behavioral healthcare and all of the treatment options that are out there." rep

Key Takeaways

- Behavioral health is increasingly becoming a core component of primary care, with younger generations of physicians helping drive a shift toward recognizing and treating mental health concerns alongside physical health needs.
- Early screening and intervention are central to WellSpan Health's integrated care model, using tools such as PHQ screenings and EHR-based decision support to help primary care providers identify and respond to behavioral health concerns sooner.
- Embedding behavioral health workflows into primary care can reduce barriers to treatment by streamlining referrals, improving care coordination and helping patients navigate a traditionally complex mental health system.
- Successful behavioral health integration requires more than adding services. It requires technology, provider collaboration and personalized care models that address patients' emotional, social and overall well-being.



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Rethinking Chronic Disease Care

How one leading healthcare organization is addressing chronic health conditions as they relate to population health at large.



Many chronic diseases are caused by factors such as smoking, improper nutrition, physical inactivity and excessive alcohol use. Despite these causes being preventable, more than 75% of midlife (ages 35–64) adults in the U.S. have at least one chronic condition.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), some groups are more affected than others by chronic disease because of factors that limit their ability to make healthy choices.

"Many of the factors impacting our health are driven by where we live and how we act," said Christopher Stanley, MD, MBA, President of Populance. "If someone can't pay their utility bills or put food on the table, it's quite likely they won't be able to focus on taking care of themselves, especially when it comes to health and doctor's orders. We as the healthcare industry need to do what we can to help these individuals face these challenges and manage their stress."

Populance, an organization advancing population health, was created to tackle the challenges of rising chronic conditions, inequities in care and fragmented care models. As a wholly owned subsidiary of Henry Ford Health, Populance was designed to transform the healthcare experience with focus and purpose by delivering smarter care for patients, providers and communities.

By partnering with physicians, hospitals and health plans to deliver value-based care solutions that improve outcomes and elevate the patient experience, Populance is able to lower the overall cost of care for at-need patients.

Enabled by the support of its own leadership and board, Populance can respond to ever-changing industry conditions and support its initial primary customers – Henry Ford Health subsidiaries Health Alliance Plan (payer) and the Mosaic Clinically Integrated Network (provider) – with agility and speed while developing economies of scale.

Filling in the gaps

In medicine, chronic disease is often approached as a clinical issue, but Dr. Stanley said that the increasing prevalence of disease also has a significant impact on population health at large.

"That's why it's so important that we care for everyone – to fill in the care gaps and make sure our physicians, facilities and even social workers are all working together to treat the whole person and ensure that each individual gets the care they need," said Dr. Stanley.

As chronic disease reaches epidemic levels in the U.S., care delivery has had to evolve to address not just disease prevention, but also early detection and long-term management of chronic disease.

"We prioritize services we know will help people get and stay healthy and manage their chronic conditions," said Dr. Stanley. "At Populance, our nurses, social workers and population health coordinators are embedded in nearly 60 clinics to support physicians by coordinating care for high-risk individuals with chronic conditions."

Healthcare with Populance includes screening patients for the social determinants of health (SDOH) – or the nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes – such as the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, worship and age.

"Any patient we identify with a barrier – like lack of transportation or access to healthy food or risk of depression – is connected with one of our population health coordinators who works with community agencies to address their needs," said Dr. Stanley.

Populance also supports its physician partners through the integration of multidisciplinary clinical teams that manage socioeconomic barriers to health.

"Ideally, the health care industry would focus on primary prevention – keeping disease from ever occurring," said Dr. Stanley. "As we progress on this journey, we invest our resources and teams on addressing preventable events during a patient's care journey."

The Populance 'Transitions of Care' program, which focuses on the safe handoff of patients across care settings, is an example of this journey, where teams provide individual case management to address critical gaps in care for patients recently discharged from the hospital, especially those who are at high risk of readmission.

"As we progress on this journey, we invest our resources and teams on addressing preventable events during a patient's care journey."

"Throughout 2025, we expanded our transitions of care support by integrating a digital outreach platform (autodial/text provided by vendor CipherHealth) with the existing clinical oversight provided by our Populance transitional care team," said Dr. Stanley.

The hybrid technology and staff approach is designed to reduce readmissions through multichannel engagement, providing standardized risk screening for all discharged patients and maximizing per-call efficiency by providing actionable data even before outreach.

"High-value care is a mindset and delivery model that prioritizes outcomes, affordability and equity," said Dr. Stanley. "We prioritize services we know will help people get and stay healthy and manage their chronic conditions, and we increase affordability by guiding people to the right care in the right place at the right time." rep

Key Takeaways

- For some groups of people, chronic disease is more prevalent because of external factors that limit their ability to make healthy choices.
- Populance, a subsidiary of Henry Ford Health, was created to address the challenges of the rising prevalence of chronic conditions and fragmented, unequal care.
- Patients identified with barriers to care such as lack of transportation, access to healthy food, risk of depression and more are connected with one Populance's population health coordinators who work with community agencies to assist them in navigating their healthcare.
- High-value care goes beyond treating illness by proactively identifying risks, coordinating care and addressing barriers before they lead to worse health outcomes.



Building the Industry's Shared Product Data Exchange

Most manufacturers I talk to spend significant hours every month reformatting product data. It takes the form of one-off emails, custom submissions and workarounds built for each trading partner. For distributors, the product data burden looks different but costs just as much: requesting attributes, reconciling specs that arrive in different formats, and tracking down image files.

All that effort points to the same opportunity: a standardized, coordinated way for the industry to exchange product data. That's why HIDA created the Product Data Exchange (PDX).

What strikes me in conversations across the industry is how aligned the two sides already are. Manufacturers want one place to publish their product information, and distributors want to receive it in one consistent format. Everyone has been asking for the same thing. What the industry needed was neutral ground, where manufacturers and distributors could build a share standard and exchange together.

Thirty-three member companies are now connected through one central exchange, publishing, verifying, and receiving product descriptions, images, and attributes through a single shared platform. Manufacturers publish once. Distributors receive verified, current information in a format ready to use. That means cleaner product listings on distributor e-commerce sites. The work becomes more streamlined and coordinated on both sides.

If you have questions about how the exchange works, who's involved, or what participation looks like, reach out to me or the HIDA membership team. The exchange gets more useful with each company that participates. This is something the industry has needed for a long time. rep



By Kelley Taft, Senior Vice President for Membership, Health Industry Distributors Association

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HIDA's market report series covers the major healthcare markets including hospitals, physician offices, ambulatory surgery centers, labs, and post-acute care. HIDA members use these reports to track trends, benchmark performance, and inform their planning. The entire series is free with membership.

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Measuring What Matters

A growing number of ambulatory surgery centers are embracing a new assessment that evaluates the systems, culture and leadership practices behind consistently safe, high-quality care.

By Pete Mercer

The ASC Safety & Quality Assessment survey, designed to help ASC leadership check the success of their processes and protocols compared to other ASCs in the country, is in its second year after launching in 2025.

Repertoire Magazine spoke to Nina Goins, executive director of the ASC Quality Collaboration, about the ASC Safety & Quality Assessment survey and what it can tell us about the level of safety and quality within the ambulatory surgery space.

What is the ASCQC?

The ASC Quality Collaboration is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing patient safety and quality of care in ASCs nationwide. Since its founding in 2006,



ASCQC has played a leading role in developing standardized quality measures, promoting transparency and providing practical resources to help ASCs improve performance.

The organization developed six of the quality measures that CMS uses for its ASC Quality Reporting Program, a pay-for-reporting program that collects and publicly reports facility-level quality measure data from ASCs paid under the ASC Fee Schedule (ASCFS) for care provided in these settings. The ASCQC maintains one of the largest and longest-running ASC quality benchmarking databases in the country, which collects data from over 2,000 ASCs and over 2.5 million patient encounters each quarter, allowing centers to compare their performance against reliable national benchmarks and identify opportunities for improvement.

The ASCs choosing to complete this assessment are proactively seeking information about how they are performing.

Goins said, "We work closely with industry leaders, quality professionals, and regulatory stakeholders to analyze trends, share best practices and develop practical resources such as assessments, toolkits, educational programs, and guidance documents that help ASCs strengthen safety and quality."

Developing a quality assessment

The ASCQC developed the ASC Safety & Quality Assessment to help ASCs find practical ways to strengthen patient safety and quality of care. The assessment is a free benchmarking tool designed to specifically help ASC leaders evaluate the strength of their safety and quality practices and identify opportunities for improvement.

"While traditional quality benchmarking focuses on outcomes, this Assessment helps answer a different question. Instead of 'How did we perform?' it asks, 'Do we have the practices in place that support consistently safe, high-quality care?'"

These are key benchmarks that any ASC should be measuring, like patient safety, infection prevention, quality improvement, patient experience, governance, and leadership engagement. After the 20-minute assessment is complete, each participating ASC receives a confidential dashboard report comparing its responses to national benchmarks.

Now in its second year, participation in the assessment continues to grow. In 2025, nearly 400 ASCs participated in the inaugural assessment. This year, more than 700 ASCs participated. Goins said, "Our hope is that centers use the results to facilitate meaningful conversations with their teams, celebrate areas of strength and prioritize opportunities for improvement."

She said, "The response we received to the first year of the assessment validated its value. In addition, it was important to continue into a second year because the real value of any assessment comes from measuring progress over time. The growth in responses to this year's assessment suggests the industry sees value in having an ASC-specific assessment focused on learning and improvement."

Bridging the gap, embracing change

From the start, Goins and her team have never been trying to point out deficiencies within the industry. They recognized that ASCs are highly efficient organizations, and they knew that they would need an assessment that respected that efficiency, while still providing meaningful insights.

Instead, they saw the opportunity to provide a structured way for organizations to evaluate and benchmark the safety and quality practices that support excellent outcomes. They designed the assessment to help participating ASCs to better understand areas like foundational systems, processes, culture and governance structures that contribute to safe care, and compare those areas with national benchmarks.

The industry has gone through some significant changes in recent years, specifically in the increased complexity of procedures performed by ASCs and further efforts to improve patient safety. As the conversation about patient safety and transparency continues to evolve, Goins has a unique perspective on the change from compliance focused reporting to using data as a tool for improvement.

"Today, more ASC leaders are actively benchmarking performance, evaluating safety practices, assessing culture, and looking for opportunities to learn from both adverse events and near misses," she said. "I've seen greater openness in discussing challenges and organizations are becoming more comfortable sharing their data, identifying gaps and focusing on improvement rather than judgement. That transparency helps create stronger safety cultures and ultimately better outcomes for patients."



"Findings in culture of safety surveys can highlight risks that ASC leaders need to understand."

Areas of opportunity

Despite the challenges healthcare faces in 2026, Goins said she is optimistic about the level of participation that they've seen in the last two assessments the ASCQC has conducted.

"The high level of participation itself is a quality signal. The ASCs choosing to complete this assessment are proactively seeking information about how they are performing. That reflects a culture of safety and quality within the industry – the strong, consistent scores from the assessment provide data to back that up."



Measuring success for the future

For Goins, success is not just the level of participation, but also seeing organizations use the results to highlight their commitment to safe, high-quality care.

Going forward, she hopes that the ASC Safety & Quality Assessment is viewed as an eagerly awaited resource that helps ASCs evaluate their safety and quality practices, while also identifying opportunities for improvement and demonstrating commitment to safety for everyone involved.

AI and analytics have high potential to help leaders uncover patterns that may not be obvious through traditional reporting, but she believes that they won't replace the essentials of an ASC.

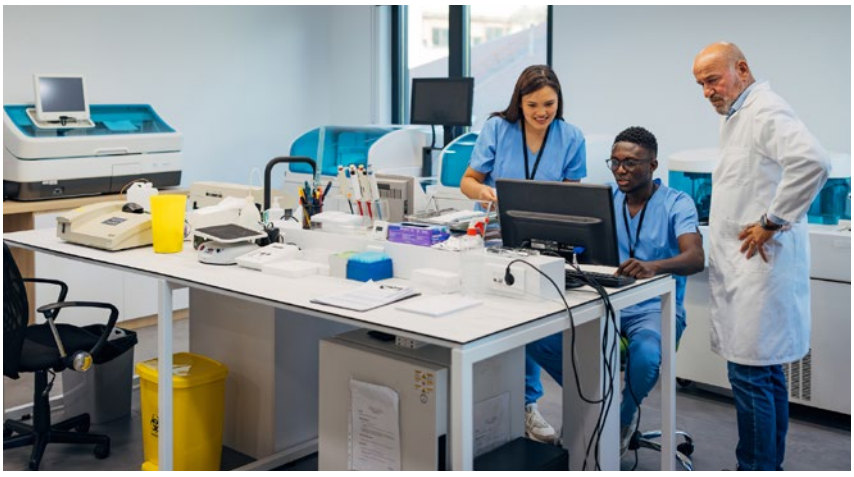
"While technology will never replace clinical judgement or a strong culture of safety, it continues to evolve, and ASCs can look forward to better tools to identify risk, prioritize improvement efforts, and make more informed decisions. The goal remains the same – safer care and better outcomes for patients." rep

The biggest surprise that they found in the results of the assessment is that many centers are not routinely measuring safety culture. Nearly all the centers that completed the assessment had foundational safety systems in place; only one-third of them did not consistently conduct a culture of patient safety survey.

She said, "Culture surveys are very valuable in that they capture what may be happening beneath the surface, such as staff comfort speaking up and how common workarounds are. Findings in culture of safety surveys can highlight risks that ASC leaders need to understand."

Key Takeaways

- **Quality starts before outcomes**
  The ASC Safety & Quality Assessment shifts the focus from simply measuring results to evaluating whether the right systems, processes and culture are in place to consistently deliver safe, high-quality patient care.
- **Safety culture remains a major opportunity**
  While most ASCs have strong foundational safety programs, only about one-third consistently conduct patient safety culture surveys, a missed opportunity to identify communication gaps, staff concerns and hidden risks before they affect patients.
- **Benchmarking is driving continuous improvement**
  Participation in the free assessment nearly doubled – from almost 400 ASCs in 2025 to more than 700 in 2026 – reflecting the industry's growing commitment to using data, transparency and benchmarking to strengthen patient safety rather than simply meet compliance requirements.



Keep It Simple: The Formula for POL Success

A successful physician office lab starts with three fundamentals – people, places and things.

Listen to this article, scan the QR Code.

We often needlessly complicate the work required to set up and maintain a physician office lab that creates great patient results and runs smoothly for the lab staff, management and the patients they serve.

On the other hand, there are strict CLIA requirements, particularly for non-waived labs, which must be met and, if they're not, can lead to a deficiency citing by an inspector in the event of a lab inspection.



By Jim Poggi

As distributor sales professionals working with our trusted lab manufacturers, it is important to remember that when we help a customer set up or expand their laboratory, our job is not to avoid deficiencies during a lab inspection. Rather, our job is to provide the products, software and guidance our customers need to comply with CLIA requirements and create a good work environment for the staff and to create excellent lab results.

The question I have always asked myself of every lab I worked with has been "Would I want my family's lab work done here?" If the answer is "no", you and your lab manufacturer have work to do to make it so.

There are only three things your POL needs to manage to be CLIA compliant and produce excellent patient results.

1 People

Your lab needs to recruit qualified individuals with the appropriate experience to fill the roles based on the CLIA classification of their lab. Your trusted lab manufacturer should have this information on hand and should be your first resource.

Lab personnel requirements

For a comprehensive CAP document regarding lab personnel requirements under CLIA scan the QR code. ▸

In addition, on-going personnel assessment is a requirement for CLIA non-waived laboratory personnel. Scan QR code for a CMS document. ▸

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Knowing the initial qualifications for lab personnel associated with their role along with the assessments required put you and the laboratory in an excellent position to initiate and maintain a quality laboratory.

2 Places

CLIA "place" requirements (the physical requirements for a safe and effective lab) may also be complemented by state and local regulations.

It is prudent to review these requirements with your trusted lab manufacturer and their technical team to ensure that any system including chemistry, immunoassay and hematology systems, in particular, meet this broad range of regulations:

- Space and layout must be adequate with proper ventilation and utilities to permit effective lab test performance.
- Temperature and humidity must be controlled and monitored as required by manufacturer instructions.
- Facilities must have effective safeguards against fire, chemical and electrical hazards.
- The lab must have policies and physical systems in place for safe containment, decontamination and disposal of hazardous and biohazard waste.
- Work areas must be clean, well-lit and organized.

3 Things

Any "thing" subject to CLIA regulations must be strictly managed and controlled by the laboratory. This not only includes the lab instruments that must meet strict performance standards, but also lab accessories including centrifuges, rockers, rotators and any specimen handling or storage systems.

When in doubt, your trusted lab manufacturer should be able to guide you and your customer. There are several requirements with testing systems that the customer must adhere to in order to assure the system conforms to manufacturer performance claims and that continued performance is tested to assure ongoing quality. There are also quality control and proficiency testing requirements for these systems.

Your trusted lab manufacturer knows their instruments, reagents and accessories better than anyone. They should always be your first resource and counted on as the most experienced source of information for our lab customers. They know and understand the performance characteristics of their systems, their maintenance requirements, QC and PT requirements so much better than any other source. They should be with you and your customer during the sales process, system set up, quarterly business reviews and any time questions about system performance or CLIA compliance come up.

Be sure to create and maintain a strong relationship with these lab manufacturers and your reward will be more sales, better customer satisfaction and a stronger flow of after-sale reagent and consumable sales.

What about general CLIA questions?

While your trusted lab manufacturer is an excellent source, there are other resources you should get to know. COLA has helped a wide variety of physician office labs become comfortable with CLIA and to be confident they understand the basic CLIA requirements to say "yes" when you ask them to consider in-office testing. They are an objective source of information and have been trusted for their advice for nearly 40 years and can be counted on as a trusted source of general CLIA information.

There are also a few suites of lab software that contain all the CLIA requirements in a simple and easy-to-understand format, and walk the customer through all the tasks they need to perform to set up, manage and maintain their lab, no matter their CLIA classification. Some even have QC and system maintenance modules built in and can act as an overall lab management system for the physician office lab.

Your trusted lab manufacturer or your home office may have recommendations for these types of systems. Their unique value is the level of simplicity they provide

for initial lab set up and for guidance once the lab is up and running. These systems, along with the guidance from your lab manufacturer, can be a very effective two-part solution to general and specific lab management and CLIA compliance. It is worth your time to understand these types of software solutions.

HIDA offers excellent training modules through its AMS training program. Ask your experienced colleagues what they think of this program. Chances are they will give it a strong recommendation and suggest that you ask to participate in it.

There are also general and specific lab training modules offered by virtually every medical specialty which are appropriate for your customers. In addition, the three entities that manage CLIA – CMS, the CDC and the FDA – also offer multiple resources.

Some are essentially links to CLIA documents and can be challenging to read, interpret and understand. Others are designed to be used at the novice laboratorian and lab salesperson level.

Scan the QR code to view the CDC One Lab program.

Your trusted lab manufacturer knows their instruments, reagents and accessories better than anyone.

I recently found the CDC One Lab training modules and was really excited to see the level at which they provide information.

Check with your sales manager, but I recommend them highly for you and for customers on the fence about setting up a POL lab or that just want to quickly brush up on a topic or two. I took two courses through One Lab and found the material fun and easy to work with, and provided the right level of information you and your customers can use.

Last points

So, what's the bottom line in understanding CLIA well enough to sell lab effectively?

First, don't try to be an expert. That's why you have experienced lab manufacturers.

Second, don't be afraid. It's really as simple as people, places and things.

Third, research software suites that manage the lab for your lab customers and ask around. I think you will find them a good complement to your trusted lab manufacturers' information.

Fourth, check out One Lab. I was pleasantly surprised and I think you will be also.

Finally, make sure you are having fun while you sell lab.

Lab testing in the physician office provides the right information at the right place and the right time to provide the best healthcare to our patients. Once you become confident, you will find lab fun to sell and that will build your confidence and lab customer base. rep

Key Takeaways

- Successful physician office labs come down to three essentials: people, places and things.
- Distributor reps don't need to be CLIA experts – they need to connect customers with the right manufacturers, software and educational resources to ensure compliance and quality results.
- By relying on trusted partners and focusing on creating safe, efficient labs that deliver accurate patient testing, reps can strengthen customer relationships while growing long-term reagent and consumable sales.
- Lab management software and trusted educational resources help physician office labs stay organized, meet CLIA requirements and operate more efficiently.



Healthcare Leaders and the Future of Sustainable Care

How healthcare leaders play a pivotal role in driving sustainable change within healthcare.

By Jenna Hughes

Editor's note: *The following is part two of a three-part series where* Repertoire Magazine *examines how the med/surg industry is working toward a future of more sustainable healthcare practices.*

In healthcare, sustainability refers to the implementation of cost-efficient, environmentally friendly practices that support healthy and resilient communities, according to the American Hospital Association's Sustainability Roadmap for Healthcare.

As a crucial part of the effort to go green, leaders at the helm of hospitals, health systems and medical device manufacturing must recognize the integral role their organizations play in guiding the health sector toward a sustainable future.

"Integrating environmental responsibility into the existing organizational structure of a hospital or health system is critical to achieving measurable results," said Gwyneth Jones, Senior Director at Practice Greenhealth.

Healthcare leaders not only have the capacity to set sustainable goals for their organization – such as reducing energy consumption, waste generation and greenhouse gas emissions – but they can also embolden their teams to explore and implement environmentally friendly solutions across their organization.

"Setting the direction and leading is critical to demonstrate both commitment and aspiration to improving our environment," said Christian Hutter, Associate Director, Sustainability and Packaging at B. Braun Medical Inc. "Viewing product performance

wholistically, including impact on our environment such as waste generation and taking a life cycle approach to evaluating purchasing decisions are key areas of opportunity to lead."

Environmental sustainability ultimately provides organizations with near-and long-term financial savings, improves patient care and increases workforce engagement. Health system leadership must therefore encourage the integration of sustainability practices within an organization's strategic plan – woven through capital decisions, procurement policy and clinical operations.

"Strong leadership in sustainability means creating executive level councils with real decision-making authority that set goals and review progress the same way they review financial performance, supported by front-line teams that are given clear objectives and support in achieving them," said Jones. "And it means accountability. Health systems have started tying executive compensation to meeting specific targets, like how much pollution they cut or how much waste they reduce."

The Greenhouse Gas Protocol, a globally-accepted reporting standard, keeps organizations accountable for their emissions by defining three categories:

- **Scope 1**, which covers direct emissions from a facility's own operations.
- **Scope 2**, which comes from the energy a facility purchases.
- **Scope 3**, which covers emissions across supply chains and investments.

"Health systems have started tying executive compensation to meeting specific targets, like how much pollution they cut or how much waste they reduce."

Health systems like Hackensack Meridian Health, for example, take ownership of their environmental impact by tying executive compensation directly to reducing their Scope 1 and 2 emissions – the pollution produced by their own buildings and energy use.

Many health systems have now begun explicitly referring to the reduction of emissions and other environmental concerns as the number one threat to global public health in their organizational strategies; which cascade into their organizational goals and metrics.

"When leadership frames environmental issues as crucial to success, the rest of the organization takes notice," said Jones. "The waste and pollution problems don't get solved by the sustainability team alone. They get solved when every department head knows it's part of their job, too. Also, if leaders are aware, it trickles down to the rest of the staff and becomes a part of the workplace culture. Once hospital executives understand what is possible, and that it can reduce costs while improving care, these programs really take off." rep

Key Takeaways

- When it comes to sustainability, leadership has the power to guide an organizational culture that encourages environmentally friendly solutions.
- Hospital leaders must navigate a path forward to ensure sustainability is a top priority.
- If leaders champion sustainability initiatives, they in turn foster long-term health savings and improved patient outcomes.
- Sustainability efforts are most effective when they move beyond standalone initiatives and become embedded into everyday decision-making, including procurement, capital planning, clinical operations and accountability measures.

The Long-Term Care Crunch

Workforce gains offer hope, but declining bed capacity and rising demand signal a looming access crisis for skilled nursing and residential care.

By Jenna Hughes

Listen to this article, scan the QR Code.

Nursing facilities faced unprecedented financial challenges during the pandemic. The impacts of COVID-19 resulted in lower occupancy rates and revenue in nursing homes, higher operating costs and exacerbation of existing staffing shortages, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

After historic job losses in recent years, the nursing workforce is now slowly recovering and stabilizing, according to the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living's (AHCA/NCAL) 2026 Nursing Home Workforce Report. Ongoing access to long-term care, however, remains a growing concern as the nation's aging population continues to grow.



"The aging population is growing rapidly, and demand for long-term care is expected to rise significantly in the coming years," according to the AHCA/NCAL. "We need to support the entire continuum of care because each long-term care setting has a valuable role to play. The most cost-effective and life-affirming setting for a senior is the one best suited to their needs."

Workforce shortages

Skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) are the primary provider of institutional post-acute care in the U.S., according to the JAMA study "Changes in US Skilled Nursing Facility Capacity Following the COVID-19 Pandemic." SNFs provide transitional care, such as ongoing patient care after recovery from an illness, injury or surgery. SNFs often also include rehabilitative services for patients.

On the other hand, nursing home care, also known as long-term residential care, focuses on managing patient's chronic conditions and providing ongoing daily living assistance such as with tasks like dressing, bathing or eating.

SNFs especially experienced historic workforce losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to struggle today with finding adequate numbers of qualified caregivers. Many facilities made the difficult decision to reduce the number of beds

available during the pandemic in order to safely operate.

The number of licensed skilled nursing beds in the U.S. has, in fact, dropped since 2019, with estimated operating capacity based on maximum census counts having declined 5% by 2024, and many counties experiencing declines of 15% or more, per the JAMA study. The largest declines were more common among rural counties, and capacity declines were larger in counties with more frequent reports of SNF staffing shortages.

By 2028, the U.S. is projected to face a deficit of 100,000 health care workers, with the greatest gap among nursing assistants – caregivers who are often considered the backbone of long-term care.

When SNFs are forced to close or limit admissions due to caregiver shortages, the impacts are immeasurable on residents and their families – hospitals that experienced larger declines in nearby SNF capacity experienced greater increases in mean length of stay, percentage of stays lasting 28 or more days, and median distance traveled to admitting SNFs.

Areas with more significant declines in SNF capacity were also associated with longer hospital stays and increased travel distances to SNFs – which, according to the JAMA study, suggests that declines in operating capacity may be impairing patients' access to care.



While all other healthcare sectors have already gained additional jobs post-COVID, nursing homes are still largely rebounding from the pandemic.

Moreover, Medicaid-only nursing facilities had higher closure rates than Medicare-only skilled-nursing facilities and dually certified nursing homes, per a National Institutes of Health (NIH) report.

"With residents primarily relying on Medicaid or Medicare for this care, this means those programs must be protected and fully funded," said AHCA/NCAL. "Meanwhile, creating a more effective oversight system that promotes quality care and innovation while maintaining safety, accountability and transparency will ultimately improve care." According to AHCA/NCAL, addressing the growing caregiver shortage is crucial to ensure seniors and those with disabilities are able to access long-term care.

Steady decline in turnover

During the pandemic, nursing homes offered the highest wage rate increase across all of health care to incentivize new and retain current employees.

Amid ongoing struggles, the nursing home workforce has continued to increase post-pandemic. According to the AHCA/NCAL report, the nursing home workforce gained more than 40,700 total workers in 2025.

Approximately 62% of providers, per the Nursing Home Workforce Report, say their overall workforce situation has gotten better in the past year,

and nursing turnover rates have steadily declined since mid-2022, with nursing homes reducing total nursing and RN turnover by nearly 11%.

To recruit new employees and retain existing ones, nursing homes have implemented strategies including increased compensation, updated staff benefits packages, providing education and training opportunities, prioritizing employee well-being and enhancing staff's work-life balance.

Moving forward

While nursing homes are indeed slowly recovering from the pandemic, a growing elderly population means access to care remains very much a concern.

While all other healthcare sectors have already gained additional jobs post-COVID, nursing homes are still largely rebounding from the pandemic. According to AHCA/NCAL, nursing homes still need 26,500 workers to return to pre-pandemic levels.

Intense competition from other care settings and private industries, many of which have more resources, continue to make recruitment to the nursing home profession challenging.

Nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities need prompt solutions, as according to AHCA/NCAL, in the next decade, the population of adults 80 and older is expected to increase by 8 million. The average age as of now is 79.

"Providers across the long-term care continuum have made considerable progress to enhance their workforce," said the AHCA/NCAL. "But population projections suggest a real challenge with having enough caregivers throughout health care in the coming years. To meet this demand, long-term care providers require the support of lawmakers to ensure we have the people, policies, and payment needed to deliver the highest quality care."

Key Takeaways

- Skilled nursing facilities continue to struggle with staffing shortages and reduced capacity following the pandemic, limiting access to long-term and post-acute care in many communities.
- The nursing home workforce is gradually recovering, with facilities adding workers and lowering turnover rates through higher pay, better benefits and employee support initiatives.
- As the U.S. senior population rapidly grows, industry leaders are calling for increased policy and funding support to strengthen the long-term care workforce and protect access to care.

AHCA/NCAL has responded to this escalating challenge by launching policy solutions as an approach to the rising elderly population and declining caregiver numbers – aimed at caregiver recruitment and retention, training and career growth, technology and innovation and building the pipeline (investing in nursing schools and nursing facilities) and streamlining legal pathways for international caregivers.

"Our 'Caregivers for Tomorrow' policy roadmap calls on federal and state policymakers to invest in the caregiver pipeline, recruitment efforts and career development to support strengthening the strong long term care workforce and access to care for residents," said AHCA/NCAL.

AHCA/NCAL also promotes 'The Better Way,' a policy roadmap to help transform care for older adults and individuals with disabilities, prioritizing the strengthening of the long-term care workforce, protecting Medicaid, reaffirming the promise of Medicare Advantage and rationalizing the regulatory environment.

"With the significant growth of the senior population, providers are committed to meet the demand for care while providing healthcare solutions that improve outcomes for seniors and individuals with disabilities," said the AHCA/NCAL. "We look forward to working with policymakers to meet this critical moment." rep

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When Infection Prevention Goes Outpatient

How Northside Hospital has designed protocols, workflows and communication to protect patients across a growing network of ambulatory sites.

Listen to this article, scan the QR Code.

As healthcare continues its steady shift toward outpatient care, infection prevention leaders are adapting strategies to manage risk across a growing network of ambulatory facilities. Procedures that once took place almost exclusively inside hospitals are increasingly being performed in ambulatory surgery centers, physician offices and specialty clinics. While these settings offer efficiency and convenience, they also bring unique challenges for infection prevention teams responsible for protecting patients and staff.

At Northside Hospital, Kaleb Price, MPH, CIC, FAPIC, oversees infection prevention efforts across procedural areas that span both hospital and outpatient environments. As Clinical Manager of the Procedural Infection Prevention Team, Price and his colleagues focus on locations where invasive procedures or anesthesia are performed – ranging from operating rooms to gastrointestinal labs and interventional procedure suites.

"We call our team the Procedural Infection Prevention Team," Price said. "Procedures is pretty broad, but basically everywhere we might be doing invasive procedures or general anesthesia. So that's operating rooms, pre-op and post-op areas, interventional radiology, interventional cardiology, and our GI labs where we do a lot of our scopes."

In these settings, Price's team is responsible for key infection prevention activities, including surgical site infection prevention, device reprocessing oversight, environmental hygiene practices and evaluating whether facilities are meeting appropriate standards for cleanliness and safety.

Risk assessment drives strategy

Although many of the core infection prevention principles remain the same across care settings, Price said the outpatient environment requires a slightly different approach. Infection prevention teams begin by identifying the most likely risks within a particular setting and then implementing processes, training or products that can reduce those risks.

"In infection prevention we always take things from a risk assessment standpoint," he said. "We look at what are the most likely risks in this area, and then what sort of interventions or processes or products do we

need to put in place to reduce infection risk."

One key difference between hospital and outpatient environments involves patient acuity and diagnostic clarity. In acute care hospitals, patients often arrive with severe symptoms and are rapidly diagnosed. In outpatient clinics, however, symptoms may be milder or less specific, making early detection of infectious diseases more challenging.

"Patients who come to outpatient clinics often have milder symptoms than they would if they showed up to the emergency room," Price said. "Usually people who feel really, really sick are going to go to the emergency room. People who have milder symptoms or are earlier in the course of an infection are often going to go to their primary care doctor or an urgent care clinic."

That dynamic means clinicians must remain vigilant for contagious illnesses even when symptoms are nonspecific. Early signs such as fever, rash or general illness could signal more serious conditions that require isolation precautions or additional testing.

Price noted that outpatient teams must remain alert for highly contagious diseases such as Measles, Tuberculosis or Mpox. Identifying these conditions quickly helps limit potential exposure within clinics that may not have the same physical infrastructure as hospitals for isolating patients.

Communication is critical

Another major difference between inpatient and outpatient infection prevention is simply scale. While infection preventionists may round daily in hospital units, overseeing hundreds of outpatient locations requires a very different operational model.

Northside's system includes nearly 500 outpatient clinics – far too many to support daily on-site infection prevention coverage.

"You can't have an infection preventionist on site every day at every one of those," Price said.

Instead, teams rely heavily on communication and scheduled outreach. Infection prevention leaders conduct routine rounding visits to outpatient sites while also maintaining regular contact through phone calls, email updates, webinars and education sessions.

Communication also extends beyond the health system itself. "We work closely with the Health Department so that we can get reports about epidemiologically significant organisms or infections that are going around in the community," he said. "Then we communicate that to our clinics."

Maintaining that steady flow of information ensures frontline staff remain aware of emerging threats and can quickly implement screening protocols or precautionary measures.

Infrastructure and operational challenges

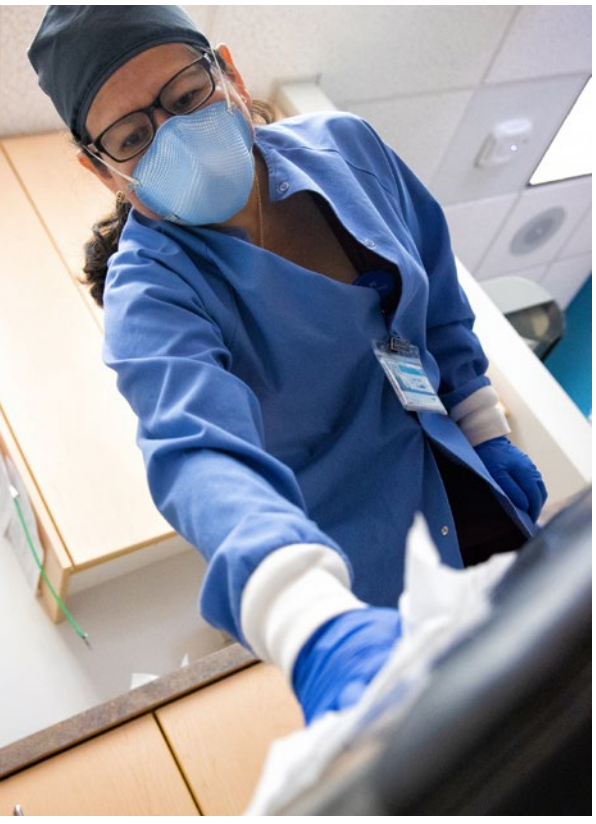
Operational and infrastructure differences also create challenges for infection prevention in outpatient settings. Hospitals typically own and manage their facilities, which allows them to maintain tight control over environmental services, building maintenance and water systems.

Many outpatient facilities, however, operate within leased spaces that may be part of mixed-use buildings containing retail shops, restaurants or offices. That arrangement can complicate infection prevention planning.

"Our ambulatory surgery centers and physician offices often don't own their own space," Price said. "So when they're setting up contracts with building owners and managers, or environmental services who are going to provide cleaning, they have to make sure they really nail down what the expectations are."

Healthcare facilities often require specialized environmental controls – from enhanced cleaning protocols to monitoring of water systems – because pathogens can spread through contaminated surfaces or infrastructure. If these expectations are not clearly defined in service contracts, clinics may struggle to maintain appropriate infection prevention standards.

Staffing differences also play a role. Hospitals typically maintain dedicated teams focused on infection prevention, antimicrobial stewardship, quality improvement and product evaluation. Outpatient facilities,



Removing complexity from instrument reprocessing

Instrument reprocessing can be a challenge in outpatient clinics, where nurses or medical assistants often handle cleaning and sterilization. Northside Hospital has transitioned almost all of their reusable instrument sterilization to SPD, but they do still have some in-office sterilization. "Those staff do maintain training and competency checks to make sure they're providing the same level of safety as staff working in SPD," Price said.

especially smaller physician practices, may not have personnel assigned to these functions.

"In hospitals we often have dedicated teams to topics like infection prevention or antimicrobial stewardship or quality or product evaluation," Price said. "In our outpatient clinics, they may not have that person on site to do some of that."

Standardization across a growing outpatient network

As healthcare continues shifting toward outpatient settings, health systems face a growing challenge: ensuring infection prevention practices remain consistent across dozens – or even hundreds – of facilities.

For large systems like Northside Hospital, which operates hundreds of outpatient locations, standardization is essential to maintaining patient and staff safety. Price said success starts with building clear systemwide policies and reinforcing them through ongoing oversight, education, and operational support.

"We standardize our policies, and that drives the expectation across the system," he said. "And then the infection prevention team performs routine audits to observe the infection prevention practices at each of our facilities."

These audits help ensure that frontline staff follow established protocols while also identifying opportunities for additional education and training. The infection prevention team supplements those efforts with regular communication and webinars to keep staff informed about evolving best practices.

Another key element is centralized purchasing. By routing equipment and supply purchases through a single system, Northside's purchasing department can work closely with infection prevention specialists to monitor product usage and ensure staff have the right tools available.

"Our purchasing department can monitor usage and work with the infection prevention team to make sure the folks who are on the frontline providing care have access to products that are safe and reliable," Price explained. "And the people in clinics or surgery centers have the training they need – whether that's how to use the products or, if they're reusable, how to clean and reprocess them."

Designing workflows that encourage safer behavior

Beyond policies and equipment, infection prevention also depends on how clinical environments are designed and how staff move through them.

"We always want the safest action for our staff to be easily achieved," Price said. "Ideally, it's the easiest way they can do things."

To achieve that goal, infection prevention teams often observe staff as they work in

exam rooms or operating rooms. These observations can reveal simple adjustments that improve compliance with safety protocols.

For example, the placement of hand hygiene products can significantly influence whether staff use them consistently.

"We might go and observe how staff move around an exam room while they're providing care," Price said. "If we see where they spend most of their time, that might be where we need to put the hand hygiene products."

If hand sanitizer is placed in an inconvenient location – such as across the room or behind equipment – staff may be less likely to use it. Moving dispensers closer to the point of care can dramatically increase compliance.

Similarly, the team evaluates where sharps containers are located and how equipment is arranged within the workspace.

Small changes can have a big impact.

"Maybe your sharps container isn't quite in the right place, or your hand hygiene products are on the wrong wall," Price said. "If we just move them from the left side of the room to the right side, staff may use them much more often."

Technology can also help reduce risk. Whenever possible, Northside looks for devices with built-in safety features, such as needles or scalpels with automatic safety mechanisms that engage after use.

"That's one less thing staff have to think about," Price said. "We protect them without anyone having to actually do anything."

By combining standardized policies, centralized resources, and thoughtful workflow design, large health systems can help ensure infection prevention practices remain strong – even as care increasingly moves outside the hospital walls.

Opportunities for suppliers and distributors

As outpatient care continues to expand, suppliers and distributors can play an increasingly important role in supporting infection prevention efforts. Price noted that many ambulatory facilities rely on outside expertise and trusted partners to help evaluate products, maintain compliance and implement best practices.



Education is particularly valuable. Training resources, product guidance and workflow support can help clinics ensure staff understand how to properly use infection prevention tools – from disinfectants and personal protective equipment to device reprocessing systems.

Suppliers can also assist facilities in selecting products that align with the specific risks associated with outpatient care. For example, portable infection prevention technologies, simplified reprocessing solutions and easy-to-implement environmental cleaning tools may be particularly useful in clinics that lack large support teams.

When it comes to supporting outpatient clinic facilities, clear and timely communication from suppliers and distributors can make all the difference. "If they can communicate any changes or problems to us as soon as possible – whether it's a change in an IFU or a product backorder – that obviously can cause significant changes to our workflow, to the care staff's workflow," Price explained. "The earlier we know about something like that, the earlier we can begin planning for that change. That makes it easier for us to come up with ways to continue providing the same standard of care as before."

Even small changes can ripple throughout the system, he noted. "Even if it seems minor – a short backorder or a small change in IFU – that can actually have significant effects. The earlier we know, the easier it is for us to adapt." In the fast-paced outpatient environment, proactive communication isn't just helpful – it's essential. rep



The Top 5 Things Reps Can Learn from Startup Founders and Entrepreneurs

From resilience and adaptability to communication and continuous learning, Alisa Cohn reveals the traits that separate top performers.

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High-performing sales reps and startup founders operate in different arenas, but the underlying demands are strikingly similar: uncertainty, pressure, constant learning and the need to perform while building something from scratch.

As author and keynote speaker Alisa Cohn puts it, success in both worlds comes down to "learning rapidly, adapting rapidly to current situation." The best performers execute – and evolve – in real time.

Cohn is an executive coach who works with startup founders, CEOs and senior leaders to help them scale not just their companies, but their leadership. She is the author of *From Start-Up to Grown-Up*, an award-winning book that explores how founders evolve as their businesses grow. Cohn has coached leadership teams at high-growth startups like Venmo, Etsy and DraftKings, as well as major organizations such as Google, IBM and Microsoft. Her work focuses on helping leaders build self-awareness, improve communication and navigate the challenges of rapid growth and uncertainty.

In an interview with *Repertoire Magazine*, Cohn shared several valuable insights reps can take from business founders and successful entrepreneurs.

1 Learn fast, adapt faster

Founders don't wait for ideal conditions – they move through ambiguity. The same applies to elite sales reps navigating shifting buyer needs and competitive pressure.

"It's about either find a way or make a way," Cohn said. "That's what founders do and that's what the best sales leaders do."

For reps, this shows up in how quickly they:

- Adjust messaging mid-cycle
- Reframe objections instead of resisting them
- Keep momentum when deals stall

The underlying belief is simple: there is always another path forward.

2 Growth comes from feedback and experimentation

One of the most practical tools Cohn highlights is structured feedback – especially 360 reviews – and small, deliberate experiments to improve performance.

The goal is targeted iteration:

- Identify one weak point
- Test a new behavior
- Measure and refine

This applies directly to sales execution, from discovery to follow-up.

As she explains, growth comes from "tiny experiments" that help you build new skills over time rather than trying to overhaul everything at once.

3 Your intention isn't your impact

One of the most powerful ideas from the interview is the disconnect between what we think we're communicating and what others actually receive.

Cohn is direct about it: "For you, you're the expert on your intention, but everybody around you is the expert on your impact."

For reps, this is especially important in customer-facing conversations, where tone, wording and timing can completely change perception. She also warns about blind spots, especially when people assume their natural communication style is landing the way they expect.

The fix involves feedback. Without it, misalignment quietly compounds.

4 Resilience is built through control, not just mindset

Rejection is part of the job for both founders and sales reps. What separates high performers is how quickly they recover and re-engage.

Cohn emphasizes two foundations:

First, physical and mental stability matters more than people think. Sleep, nutrition and recovery directly affect performance under stress.

Second, focus on what you can control. "You can't control if the customer says no," she noted. "You can control your process. You can control your ability to try again."

She also reframes rejection itself: "Every single no turns you closer to a yes."

That mindset shift is what keeps momentum alive through long sales cycles.

5 Under pressure, structure your communication

When stakes rise, communication often breaks down into emotion, urgency or venting. Cohn argues that top performers resist that instinct.

Her framework is simple but powerful: "Take a pause before you speak."

Then ask a key question: "What am I trying to do here?"

For reps, this becomes critical in high-pressure moments – whether delivering bad news, handling objections or negotiating terms. Without intention, communication becomes noise instead of influence.

Structure creates clarity, and clarity drives outcomes.

Keep building

The gap between startup founders and sales reps is smaller than it appears. Both roles require speed, resilience, adaptability and disciplined communication under pressure.

As Cohn notes, one of the biggest misconceptions about high performance is: "That you don't have to try really hard. That it's just going to happen."

In reality, success is built through feedback, iteration and the willingness to keep going when outcomes aren't guaranteed. rep

Key Takeaways

- Adapt quickly when circumstances change
- Commit to continuous improvement
- Focus on your impact, not just your intent
- Build resilience through discipline and process



As Max Carter leaves turned orange and the mornings became chilly, Max packed his backpack for another busy day. Inside were catalogs, notes, and his favorite helper — a shiny blue pen named Scout.

Scout peeked out of the backpack.

"Brrr!" he said. **"It must be flu season."**

Max smiled. **"That's right. And that means doctor's offices are about to get very busy."**

Scout nodded. **"So today we'll write lots of orders?"**

"Maybe," Max said. **"But first, we need to make sure our customers are ready."**

Planning ahead

Their first stop was Maple Grove Family Clinic.

Inside, Nurse Sarah was organizing exam rooms.

"Good morning, Max!" she said.
**"Things are quiet now,
but we know that won't last."**

"When flu season arrives," Max said,
"you'll be seeing lots of patients every day."

Scout whispered,
"Sounds like everyone needs a plan."

"Exactly," Max replied.

Max and Nurse Sarah walked through the supply room together.

"Do you have enough flu tests?" Max asked.

Sarah checked the shelf.

"We're getting low."

**"What about gloves, masks
and disinfectant wipes?"**

Sarah looked again.

**"We should probably order more
before things get busy."**

Scout bounced excitedly.

"Now we're thinking ahead!"

Max smiled. **"It's much easier to prepare before patients fill the waiting room."**

Sarah nodded. **"If we wait until we're out of supplies, it could be too late."**

Ready to help

After making a list of everything the clinic would need, Max and Scout headed back to the car.

Scout looked thoughtful.

"So today wasn't just about selling supplies."

"No," Max said. **"It was about helping the clinic be ready before flu season arrives."**

Scout grinned.

"When doctors and nurses have the supplies they need, they can spend more time taking care of patients."

"And that's our job," Max said.

He clipped Scout back onto his shirt.

"Ready for the next clinic?"

Scout smiled.

"Always. Let's help everyone get ready before the first sneeze!"



Industry News

Cardinal Health expands home care business with two tuck-in acquisitions

Cardinal Health announced it has entered into two definitive agreements that accelerate its at-Home Solutions' growth strategy. Cardinal Health will acquire the Diabetes Health business of AdaptHealth Corp., and, in its entirety, Strive Medical, a multi-specialty supply provider with a focus on urology. Combined, the transactions total approximately $360 million in cash, subject to working capital adjustments.

Both agreements enhance the framework established by Cardinal Health's most recent acquisition of Advanced Diabetes Supply (ADS). The company recently highlighted the progress of its at-Home Solutions business one year after its acquisition of ADS, including integration achievements that were realized ahead of plan. Since closing the original ADS transaction, the team successfully migrated all ADS volume onto the at-Home Solutions efficient and technology-enabled distribution network, onboarded nearly 500,000 new customers, and launched ContinuCare Pathway, a unique pharmacy-to-supplier digital referral pathway program.

Medline rebuilds California distribution capacity with new Perris facility following fire

Medline has announced plans to open a new distribution center in Perris, Calif. The approximately 1 million-square-foot facility represents another company investment in its California and overall distribution network, adding capacity and operational flexibility to support healthcare providers across the state.

This expansion comes as Medline continues its recovery and customer-support efforts following the June 11 fire at its Tracy, Calif., distribution center. On July 6, Medline announced that it secured more than 1.6 million square feet of new distribution space in Northern California, reflecting the company's continued focus on maintaining service for healthcare providers across the state. Between this announcement and the addition of Perris, Medline's California distribution center footprint is expected to reach nearly 5 million square feet by mid-2027. These new facilities are expected to house many of the same technologies already in use at other Medline facilities.

Midmark celebrates Glasgow facility renovation

Midmark Corp. announced the completion of a recent renovation of its Glasgow, Kentucky, facility that reflects Midmark's continued investment in its teammates, the operation that supports products used in care environments across the country and the Glasgow community that has been part of the site's story for decades.

The renovation was designed to enhance the teammate experience, create a more welcoming environment for visitors and better support the work taking place in Glasgow. The Glasgow facility manufactures solid-surface countertops for medical environments in addition to other products for the dental and veterinary industry. Improvements included refreshed interior and exterior spaces, new signage, expanded teammate amenities, updated conference rooms, technology upgrades and a new entrance.

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