



Urgent Care: Thriving in a Healthcare Practitioner Shortage

FACT: The \$15.3 billion urgent care industry is growing at nearly 6% a year, while experts predict we will need 91,500 new doctors by 2020.

Association of American Medical Colleges

Whether you're operating an urgent care center or thinking about opening one, here's what you need to know to successfully staff your center during the healthcare practitioner shortage.

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Introduction

To better meet patient demands, grow revenue and add new patients, many hospitals have embraced an urgent care strategy.

In fact, hospitals own over 33% of all urgent care facilities — more than any other ownership category. According to the Urgent Care Association of America:

- 83% of urgent care facilities experienced growth in 2013
- 90% reported a patient wait time of 30 minutes or less to see a provider
- 97% are open 7 days per week

But what remains to be seen is how the staffing shortage will affect this rapid growth.

With over 30 years of healthcare staffing experience, AMN Healthcare has been an industry expert on staffing. So to help you understand how the shortage might affect your urgent care strategy, we put together the ebook, “Urgent Care: Thriving in a Healthcare Practitioner Shortage.”

Hospitals looking to start or possibly expand their urgent care strategy will learn:

- How the staffing shortage will challenge urgent care growth
- Why hospitals are leading the way in urgent care ownership
- The importance of having a solid staffing plan in place
- How one urgent care facility solved its staffing problems using locum tenens
- How to choose an urgent care staffing partner

If you have any questions or want to learn more about AMN Urgent Care Staffing Services, call (866) 352-5959 or visit www.amnhealthcare.com/urgentcare.

As More Hospitals Enter the Urgent Care Market, Will Staffing Shortages Challenge Growth?

Urgent care centers expected to grow nearly 6% per year through 2018

Akron Children's Hospital in Akron, Ohio, recently converted one of its emergency departments into a pediatric urgent care center to meet a growing demand: families are increasingly seeking lower cost options for treating non-emergency illnesses and injuries. In fact, hospitals around the country are opening urgent care centers to better serve patients and increase revenue. But what remains to be seen is whether a shortage of healthcare professionals will inhibit urgent care center growth.

Why hospitals are adopting an urgent care strategy

Urgent care centers are growing rapidly in number because they offer lower costs for patients, shorter wait times, fast service and extended hours. According to the Urgent Care Association of America, hospitals are increasingly including urgent care as an integral component of their ambulatory care strategy not only to meet patient demand but also to create new revenue and patients.

Patients walking through the urgent care door could end up being referred to the main hospital for more extensive treatment, or the patient could also be introduced to a larger healthcare network that the hospital belongs to, if and when further care is needed.

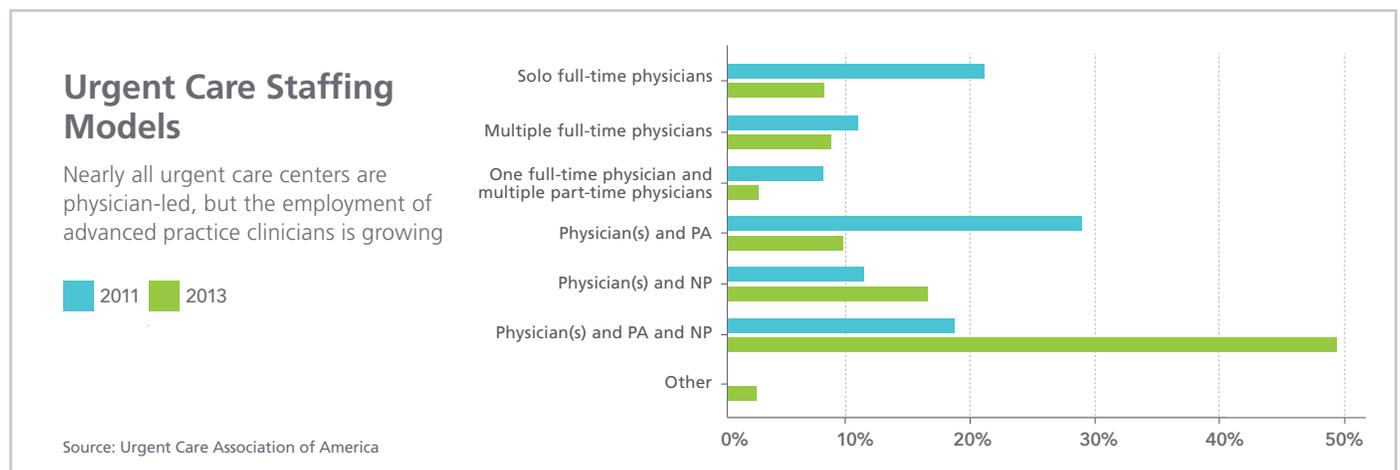
Also, many newly insured patients from the Affordable Care Act are not accustomed to traditional healthcare environments and seem to prefer the clinics' more casual and convenient settings.

Urgent care growth and healthcare shortages

With approximately 9,000 urgent care centers operating in the United States today, urgent care, currently a \$15.3 billion business, is expected to grow 5.8% each year through 2018, according to a 2013 study by IBISWorld. More than 80% of urgent care centers increased their number of patient visits from 2011 to 2013, according to a 2014 report from the Urgent Care Association of America. Square footage of urgent care centers also increased significantly during that period, the report said.

However, at the same time that urgent care centers are undergoing rapid growth, shortages also are growing for the healthcare professionals who staff these facilities.

"Throughout healthcare, we will need about 15,000 additional primary care doctors just to meet the volume of newly insured through the Affordable Care Act which is projected to cover up





to 30 million patients by 2019,” said Jeff Waddill, division vice president of Staff Care, a locum tenens company that is part of AMN Healthcare. “Among the biggest shortages for physicians are family practice and internal medicine. And those are exactly the specialties that feed the urgent care engine.”

The clinics also employ significant numbers of nurse practitioners, another healthcare role in short supply. In addition to the growing number of insured, the aging of the population is also creating increased demand for healthcare professionals.

Waddill said there is no panacea for the practitioner shortage challenging healthcare providers, including urgent care clinics. “The impact will sooner or later affect nearly every healthcare facility, but the fast growth of urgent care centers may mean that they experience shortage impacts sooner rather than later,” he said.

Why your urgent care facility needs a staffing plan

Consequently, the goal becomes achieving and maintaining proper staffing levels so urgent care clinics can concentrate on meeting their patients’ needs. To keep quality of care and patient satisfaction high, Waddill said urgent care centers need staffing plans in place. According to the American Nurses Association, staffing plans should address:

- The ability to be flexible
- The intensity of patients’ needs
- Staff experience
- Unit layout
- Resource availability

In addition to staff size and expertise needed to cover patient visits and predominant disorders treated, a staffing plan must include variables such as ramped-up need during cold and flu season and regional demographics and growth rates.

Ensuring adequate staffing is key, added Waddill, because patient expectation is a priority when it comes to urgent care services. A patient can basically go to an emergency room for anything that can be dealt with in an urgent care setting, he continued. But it’s the short wait times, cost savings and convenient, extended hours that lure people to urgent care.

“It still comes down to convenience. We know that about 75% of urgent cares are located in suburban markets, and the patient experience is typically a good one,” Waddill said. “The overall value associated with the experience is not as important as the quality of care. But it’s important that patients are able to get to an urgent care clinic quickly and have the sense that they are going to be seen relatively quickly.”

Along with easy care access, urgent care facilities must remain competitive to attract the quality healthcare professionals needed to meet patient demands in a growing industry. This includes planning for optimal benefits and work environment in order to recruit nationally to find top candidates, Waddill said.

Finally, your staffing plan should explore the benefits of using a mix of temporary and permanent staffing positions to deal with shortages. You will find that temporary and permanent staff rates are similar, but when you have a vacancy, a loss in revenue resulting from that vacancy can far exceed the cost of having a locum tenens on staff.

“The need for staff planning can quickly become evident in a fast-growth environment such as urgent care,” Waddill said. “Early signs of trouble from rapid growth include difficulties in filling shift schedules and staff burnout.” He said that a staffing plan that considers temporary and permanent clinicians can help avoid such problems while containing costs, improving employee and patient satisfaction, and decreasing adverse events.”

UCAOA Study Shows Hospitals Leading the Way in Urgent Care Center Ownership

Will reported rise in patient visits challenge this growth?

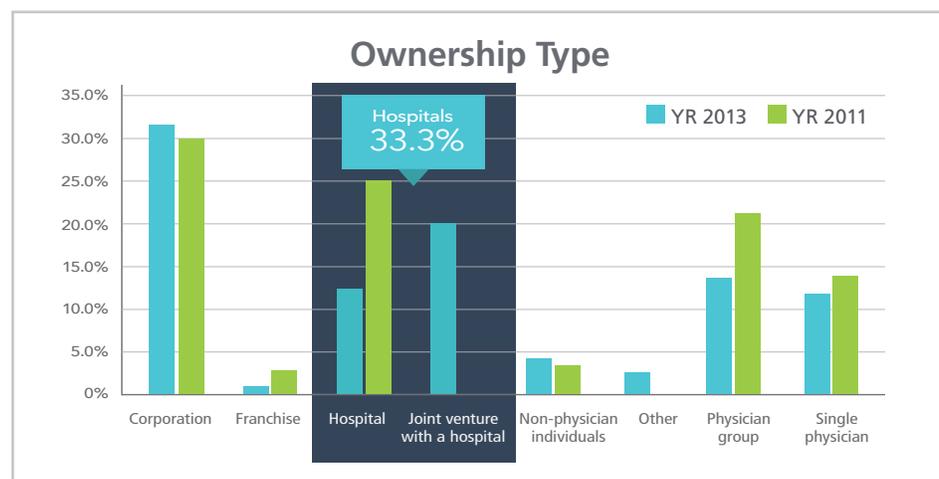
To meet patient demands, create revenue and add new patients, hospitals are making urgent care part of their ambulatory care strategy. For example, patients who use urgent care might be referred to the main hospital for further care, or they could be introduced to a larger healthcare network that the hospital belongs to.

In an urgent care market expected to grow 6% a year until 2018*, hospitals are leading the charge. According to the 2014 Benchmarking Survey Report from [the Urgent Care Association of America](#) (UCAOA) — a membership association that provides leadership, education and resources for the successful practice of urgent care — this rapid growth is fueled by:

- Hospitals including urgent care as part of their ambulatory care strategy, access to growth capital, and a model that caters to the needs of consumers and the patient experience
- The shortage of primary care physicians and, therefore, access to them
- The newly insured as a result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)

Ownership

Hospitals are clearly adopting an urgent care model: The study reports that hospital ownership of urgent care centers in 2013 was 33.3% of the market, which is up from 25.2% in 2011 and slightly more than 2013 corporation ownership (32.7%).

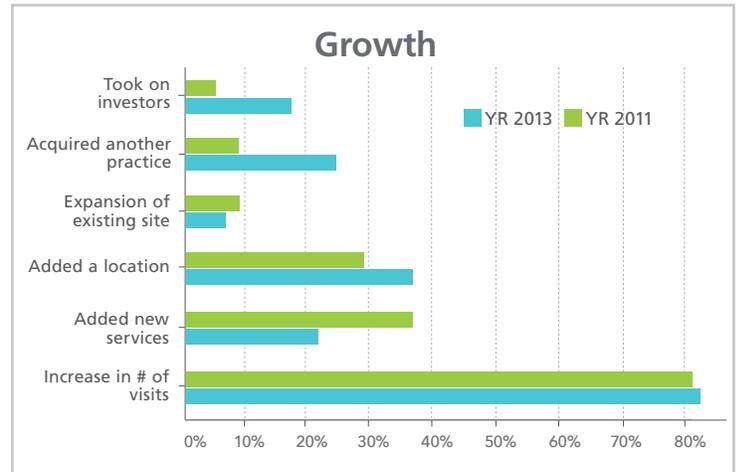


*IBIS World 2013

Growth

Urgent care growth, from adding a location to patient visits, is also evident. Greater than 80% of urgent care centers reported growing organically through an increase in patient visits from the 2011 calendar year to 2013. This increase is critical to the strategy of managing patient expectations, especially during a staffing shortage. Urgent care visitors want extended hours, short wait times and lower healthcare costs.

The concern that underlies this exciting evolution of hospital and urgent care ownership is whether the shortage of healthcare professionals, aptly pointed out by the study's authors, along with the reported increase in patient visits, will challenge urgent care success.



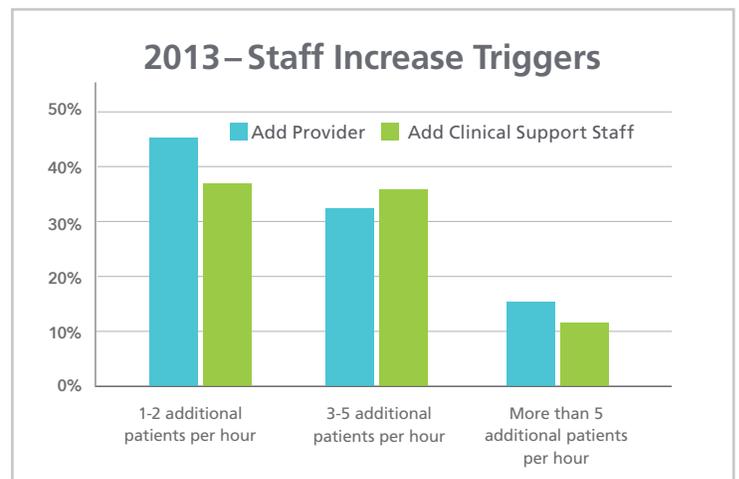
Staff increases

Related to increased patient visits, the survey also reported that patient volume is the primary trigger for adding additional staff. The majority of respondents (45.2%) said that when their urgent care center averaged one to two additional patients per hour, that became a trigger to increase provider staff, while 16.2% of respondents said it took more than five additional patients per hour to trigger staff increases.

Almost 17% of recruited physicians are locum tenens.

—UCAOA Survey

“The UCAOA survey helps make the case that staff planning is integral in a fast-growth environment such as urgent care,” said Jeff Waddill, division vice president of Staff Care, a locum tenens company that is a part of AMN Healthcare. “Early signs of trouble from rapid growth include difficulties in filling shift schedules and staff burnout. A staff plan that considers temporary and permanent clinicians can avoid such problems while containing costs, improving employee and patient satisfaction, and decreasing adverse events.”



Doctors Express (Malden, MA)

Meeting urgent care staffing needs with locum tenens

Doctors Express in Malden, Massachusetts, is a growing urgent care franchise. Its mission is to deliver high-quality, low-cost care in which patients see a physician every visit. Scott Sheridan is the owner of the Doctors Express in Malden, which has been operating for about one year. According to Sheridan, he opened his facility to about nine patients per day, and now sees about 30 patients per day. For coverage, he started out by hiring one full-time physician and a few part-timers to run the facility, which is open weekdays 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and weekends 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Today he has two physicians (one full-time and one part-time), which gives him about 95% coverage. For the 5% gap, Sheridan relies on locum tenens.

Challenge

Anticipating his need for coverage as his franchise grew and per his facility operating plan, Sheridan said it was time to hire another physician to cover the gaps in his schedule. He found and hired a physician himself, who came on board to cover three weekends a month. However, the physician was soon offered a fellowship and left Doctors Express. Sheridan said that he knows the qualities he wants in a doctor and prefers to do the job hunting and hiring himself. What he doesn't like is to be rushed in making a hiring decision. So to fill the schedule gaps left by his newly departed hire, Sheridan decided to use a staffing company to find a locum while he hunted unhurriedly for his part-time physician.

Partnership

Sheridan said after deciding to use a locum tenens staffing company to find a temporary doctor, he perused an informal list of recommended staffing companies that was put together by fellow Doctors Express owners. One of the recommended companies on that list was AMN Healthcare, so Sheridan gave them a call.

Solution

AMN came through for Sheridan and found an excellent fit for his urgent care center.

"When I work with locums, I prefer someone who has worked at another Doctors Express," said Sheridan. "So the locum from AMN Healthcare, who we now use quite a bit, worked at one of the Doctors Express centers before coming here. She is very familiar with our EMR systems and our patient flow. Finding her made it an easy transition."

By using AMN Healthcare to find high-quality locum tenens, Sheridan can now take his time finding the right candidate for his urgent care facility.

Using a locum from AMN Healthcare also saved Sheridan a steep fee from another permanent placement company he talked to. Sheridan recently interviewed a doctor to work one weekend a month, and the placement fee was over \$11,000. The number of weeks the doctor would have to work to make up the placement fee didn't make sense.

Finally, Sheridan said that getting a doctor with Doctors Express experience certainly helped, "because if we have to close because of lack of coverage, that would be a disaster."

“I am very satisfied knowing AMN Healthcare can find someone when I have an opening and it saves me from having to engage and spend time with other locum companies,” said Sheridan. “AMN is very easy to work with. They have been more of a partner than other locum companies I’ve used. They check in every week with me.”

Results

Sheridan hadn’t used many locums previously, but says his experience with AMN Healthcare has made temporary healthcare workers a viable solution for future openings. He appreciates the constant contact and advice from AMN, which has been very helpful. Also, Sheridan said he is very busy with his growing business, so it was important to find a staffing company he could trust and to go to without hesitation when he needs help immediately.

As an example to finding the right company and sticking with them, Sheridan recalled taking a call from another locum company. They said they had an available doctor for dates Sheridan needed. Sheridan asked if the doctor candidate had experience working at Doctors Express. The answer was yes so Sheridan reached out to the Doctors Express owner who worked with the doctor candidate. And although the owner confirmed that the doctor candidate had worked there, he also told Sheridan that the doctor candidate was soon fired. Sheridan said, “What’s more disappointing: that the locum company sent a candidate who was fired or that they never checked the candidate’s history and didn’t know about it?”

“I am very satisfied knowing AMN Healthcare can find someone when I have an opening and it saves me from having to engage and spend time with other locum companies,” said Sheridan. “AMN is very easy to work with. They have been more of a partner than other locum companies I’ve used. They check in every week with me.”

Sheridan said that the biggest stressor in his job is the fear a doctor won’t show up.

“Why urgent care has been so effective across the county is that we do things differently than emergency rooms,” he said. “Our urgent care is an experience. You walk in and there is no sliding glass door separating you from the registration desk. We don’t throw a clipboard in your face and tell you to just sit down. We push customer service. When you walk in we have a 60-inch flat screen TV, snacks, water and soft drinks, and we treat people nice. I tell all the doctors I work with and interview that good medical care and good customer service are not mutually exclusive. We expect you to have a great bedside manner. We want people to come back. And staffing is a big part of this — that we have enough staff to always meet the needs of the patients. And by using AMN Healthcare, these requirements are met.”



5 Criteria for Choosing an Urgent Care Staffing Partner

Staffing shortages can be detrimental to an urgent care center, so choosing the right healthcare staffing partner is critical. Ultimately the decision can impact patient outcomes, patient wait times, patient satisfaction evaluations, and even your bottom line. When choosing your urgent care staffing partner, you'll want to look for a provider that (a) can give you access to the most qualified healthcare professionals who are passionate about patient care and (b) understand patient expectations when visiting an urgent care facility. These expectations include high-quality care, short wait times, extended hours and cost savings.

Here's what hospitals should look for in an urgent care staffing partner:

1. Access to a large, diverse supply of QUALIFIED urgent care professionals

You'll want to partner with a staffing company that has a large network of urgent care clinicians. However, size isn't everything. The network's experience level must be top notch to ensure that your quality of care remains high. Plus your partner needs to understand and address the unique needs of urgent care patients.

That's where AMN comes in. The healthcare shortage will affect every facility eventually, but AMN is aware that the fast growth of urgent care centers may mean they experience shortage impacts sooner rather than later. Urgent care patients demand convenient, fast service, but without a compromise in quality. So AMN places healthcare clinicians who understand these needs in urgent care centers.

AMN has the largest network of highly trained, highly skilled healthcare professionals in the nation, including high-need and hard-to-fill specialties. All AMN healthcare professionals undergo rigorous screening and are provided with continuing education courses to ensure compliance at all times. They are ready to make an immediate impact and help you meet the specific needs of the urgent care market while maintaining your high standard of patient care.

2. A flexible, cost-effective staffing solution

Whether you need extra help for a few weeks out of the year, a much more consistent influx of urgent care professionals or permanent healthcare staffing, your partner should be flexible and available when you need them — while staying within your budget.

AMN has comprehensive recruitment and placement services to meet all your temporary and permanent staffing needs. Positions available include the professionals your urgent care facility needs: physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, medical assistants, lab techs, physical therapists and more. Temporary staff contracts can be arranged for the busy season, and when demand drops to typical levels, your facility can return to a smaller permanent workforce. And both temporary and permanent candidates go through a strict vetting and multi-step screening process so you can be assured that all your criteria are met. Plus, AMN hourly rates are competitive with the total cost of a FTE, so you can reduce OT costs and fill seasonal needs without additional hires.

3. Proven reliability and experience

When patient outcomes are at stake (as well as your bottom line), your urgent care staffing partner should have a proven track record of reliability and success in the healthcare industry.

AMN has 30 years of proven short- and long-term healthcare staffing experience in a variety of settings, and has contracts with over 80% of AHA hospitals. Plus, AMN has received The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval. And AMN was named one of America's Most Trustworthy Companies by Forbes. AMN has seen and done it all, and is respected and trusted by industry leaders.

4. A single point of contact for managing your entire clinical contingent workforce

Managing multiple workforce vendors and agencies can be quite time consuming, and inefficient from a cost and operational perspective. So finding an urgent care staffing partner that can deliver the most qualified candidates, as well as offer a cost-effective way to manage your entire clinical (and often non-clinical) contingent workforce, is ideal.

In addition to being the largest provider of the most qualified healthcare professionals in the nation, AMN is also the largest provider of Managed Services in acute and academic medical centers nationwide. The AMN Managed Services Program (MSP) offers a proven, cost-effective, single point of contact solution for the management of vendors, agencies, and contracts, in-house staffing pools, candidate selection and interviews, timekeeping, billing, and all related workforce processes.

5. Personalized customer support

Your urgent care staffing partner should be just that — a partner. You should feel confident knowing you're being supported by urgent care experts who make your success their success.

Each client at AMN is paired with a dedicated account manager — supporting you and your unique needs is the No.1 priority. Plus, AMN account managers have years of industry experience so you won't ever have to worry about the reliability of their knowledge and expertise.

Whether you're dealing with staffing shortages due to LOAs, ACA reform, census or seasonal fluctuations, or general unforeseen absences, use these five criteria to find a high-quality, reliable urgent care staffing partner for your facility.

Conclusion

The dilemma is clear: urgent care is proving to be a top strategy for hospitals to produce new revenue and gain new patients, while the physician shortage puts potential roadblocks and potholes in the road to success.

But there are two keys to keeping the shortage in check:

1. Create a viable staffing plan; and
2. Have access to the most comprehensive pool of high-quality, ready-to-go temporary and permanent urgent care professionals.

When you partner with AMN Healthcare for your workforce solutions, including your staffing needs, you are getting an industry thought leader with 30 years of staffing experience. In addition to understanding what makes an urgent care center successful, every AMN healthcare professional is:

- Prescreened
- Highly trained
- Adaptable
- Experienced
- Cost-effective

Finally, AMN assigns each client a customer-focused account manager to make sure your unique situation has the personal attention it deserves to meet your staffing goals.

To learn more about AMN Urgent Care Staffing Services, or to submit a staffing request now, call **(866) 352-5959** or visit www.amnhealthcare.com/urgentcare



We've earned
The Joint Commission's
Gold Seal of Approval™



Workforce Solutions–MSP

About AMN Healthcare

AMN Healthcare is the leader and innovator in healthcare workforce solutions and staffing services to healthcare facilities across the nation. AMN Healthcare's workforce solutions — including managed services programs, vendor management systems, recruitment process outsourcing and consulting services — enable providers to successfully reduce complexity, increase efficiency and improve patient outcomes within the rapidly evolving healthcare environment. AMN provides unparalleled access to the most comprehensive network of quality healthcare professionals through its innovative recruitment strategies and breadth of career opportunities. Clients include acute-care hospitals, community health centers and clinics, physician practice groups, retail and urgent care centers, home health facilities, pharmacies and many other healthcare settings.

To learn more about AMN Urgent Care Staffing Services, or to submit a staffing request now, call (866) 352-5959 or visit www.amnhealthcare.com/urgentcare.

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