

# CEO Viewpoint

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Pennsylvania seems to produce top healthcare executives like it does quarterbacks and Tom Zenty is no exception to that tradition. Zenty, 57, is president and CEO of University Hospitals, the Cleveland-based health system anchored by a 1,032-bed tertiary medical center, UH Case Medical Center, an affiliate of Case Western Reserve University, and incorporating three specialty hospitals and six community hospitals serving northeast Ohio. It's an organization that seems to win awards and recognition yearly, including UH Case Medical Center being named one of US News & World Report Best Hospitals in 2012. Born in the town of Carbondale in northeast Pennsylvania, Zenty's grandfathers were coalminers. He earned his undergraduate degree at Penn State in health planning administration and a master's degree in hospital administration from Xavier University in Cincinnati and another master's degree in public administration from New York University. "I wanted to be a healthcare CEO from the time I was 15," says Zenty, who credits a hometown physician for encouraging him to work at local hospitals. He did an internship in Connecticut followed by stints at hospitals in Hoboken and Jersey City, N.J. and Phoenix prior to serving as executive VP and COO at Cedars Sinai in Los Angeles. He took the top job at University Hospitals in 2003. Single, Zenty spends his free time scuba diving, golfing, reading and serving on many civic, professional and corporate boards.

**University Hospitals recently won the American Hospital Association — McKesson Quest for Quality Prize, what significance does this have for your organization?**

It has many implications. First and foremost, we want to be a leading healthcare system regardless of healthcare reform. Our true north for our organization is the quality of care we provide and this award reflects that focus. We're the first academic medical center to win the award. Our new organizational emphasis has been on the IOM's six quality aims, a focus on quality improvement and sharing knowledge with the field. Two years ago we created a Quality Institute to focus on patient satisfaction; a data base focused on patient metrics started us on this path several years ago.



TOM ZENTY, PRESIDENT  
& CEO, UNIVERSITY  
HOSPITALS HEALTH SYSTEM

**Beyond the ACA and the formations of ACO's what do you believe is the most significant factor in healthcare reform?**

The whole idea of the promise of healthcare reform was the universal access of approximately 32 million currently uninsured people.

However, two areas of concern are the payment models that accompany this additional coverage and a second issue is the future of research, teaching and the shortage of caregivers.

**What are the top key initiatives that University Hospitals has put into place that will emerge as the most beneficial in the next 5 years?**

We completed our strategic plan, Vision 2010, which includes maintaining excellent relationships with our

independent physicians, and the development of a large distributed network of our 550 employed primary care physicians throughout our service area in addition to approximately 900 faculty physicians. We now have 21 ambulatory centers, including diagnostic and urgent care centers, the new 144-bed Ahuja Medical Center and the new Seidman Cancer Center, a 150-bed specialty cancer hospital on the campus of University Hospitals Case Medical Center.

We have also developed ACOs for pediatric, Medicaid and Medicare populations. We were the recipients of the largest gift in our history which created the Harrington Discovery Institute, a national institute to support innovation in medicine, and BioMotiv, whose focus is to accelerate breakthrough discoveries into development and to create novel drugs and therapeutics for patients.

#### **What is the biggest challenge you've experienced in healthcare over your career?**

We need to successfully anticipate and consistently reinvent ourselves as professionals. As the delivery and practice of medicine continues to evolve, we need to adapt to a changing payment methodology and effectively respond to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

#### **You have been at the helm, leading University Hospitals since 2003, what accomplishment are you most proud of?**

There are several: Working with world class professionals, completion of Vision 2010, the creation of the Harrington Discovery Institute and BioMotiv which is the only program of its kind focusing on drug research, development and commercialization, and successfully completing a billion-dollar philanthropic campaign.

#### **How has IT helped you transition from a hospital-based system to a community-focused care-delivery system?**

Underscoring all of the elements of our Vision 2010 expansion is our goal of a single clinical data repository and a single medical record. To provide access to a comprehensive single source of clinical information. A patient portal is critically important for us, our patients and their caregivers to allow us to provide care over a broad geography.

IT really is our integrator. We've completed all our inpatient implementation and are now moving to standardize our ambulatory sector and physician offices.

#### **What's the biggest change you've seen in healthcare over your career?**

Aside from clinical and diagnostic advances, it's been the multitude of payment methodologies we've had to respond to over the past many years. Now our industry will undergo the greatest change we have experienced in the past 50 years.

#### **What advice would you give to a young person seeking to enter the healthcare field?**

On a personal professional level this is the most rewarding career you can choose. The intangible compensation that goes along with caring for patients is unparalleled. The changing nature of healthcare creates a lot of opportunities. You need to be creative in a field that's ever changing but it's remarkably rewarding and a lot of fun.

#### **If you weren't running University Hospitals, what would you be doing?**

I would wish I was running University Hospitals.

#### **What's a favored book that you've recently read?**

"Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle" by Dan Senor and Saul Singer. It's incredibly insightful about how a country encourages, recognizes and rewards entrepreneurship.

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