



Briefing

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EDITOR

Change generally means losing something one values and facing the unknown, which is why most people dread it. But many in the Catholic healing ministry are becoming less apprehensive about the changes in healthcare. The shift to integrated delivery, managed care, and outpatient treatment presents an opportunity to renew the values that built Catholic health-care—serving the whole person and meeting the needs of communities.

Organizations' communications, too, are returning to these "old" values. Instead of depending on the flashy ads and mass marketing efforts designed to serve the organization's needs, communicators are forming relationships that help them understand and meet their key constituents' needs and wants.

Employees are a particularly vital audience. Customer satisfaction will be increasingly important as providers seek to differentiate themselves from the pack, and employees greatly influence the perceptions of people who interact with the organization. Timken Mercy Medical Center, Canton, OH (p. 24), and Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, Baton Rouge, LA (p. 29), are developing better relationships with employees through programs that encourage staff to live out the organizations' mission and values. These facilities report improved patient satisfaction and employee morale.

Three other organizations are reaching out to employers and opinion leaders in their communities. Mercy Health Center of Central Iowa, Des Moines, reports on the community contributions of its eight subsidiaries in an annual document sent to government officials, employers, community activists, and others (p. 22). Saint Francis Medical Center, Peoria, IL, hosts monthly meetings for community leaders to educate them about healthcare issues and contributes a monthly column to an area business magazine (p. 20). Through health fairs it sponsors with a local television station, Provenant Health Partners in Denver has built relationships with 90 employers and their employees (p. 50).

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In her column on p. 66, Rhoda Weiss gives the perspectives of two communicators who have revamped their roles as their organizations have moved into managed care. For example, they have increased their efforts to assist physicians.

As you read this issue, you will notice that many of the programs have a face-to-face component that is based on listening to people and responding to their concerns. In this world of fax, e-mail, and television, old-fashioned personal contact still seems to be the most powerful way for people to form meaningful, long-term relationships. As Rhoda Weiss frequently reminds healthcare communicators, what is old is new again!

HEALTH PROGRESS AWARDS

The December 1993 issue on integrated delivery networks and the January-February 1994 cover illustration by Joel Nakamura, which depicted community commitment (see art to the right and on pp. 43-55), have won Apex Awards for publication excellence. The awards recognize excellence in graphic design, editorial content, and the ability to achieve overall communications excellence.



A Commitment to Community