Credentialing Resource Center Journal

Profile: The 2018 CRC Excellence in Medical Staff Collaboration award winners

A collaboration built on mutual respect

The 2018 CRC Excellence in Medical Staff Collaboration award winners are...
William L. Annable, MD; Karen Doran, CPMSM; Barbara Warstler, MBA, CPMSM, FASPR; and Lisa M. Zuppert, BA, CPMSM
University Hospitals Health System in Cleveland, Ohio

Editor's note: This profile is part of the special 2018 CRC contest coverage, a collaboration between ***Credentialing Resource Center Journal****,* ***Medical Staff Briefing****, and* ***Credentialing Resource Center Daily****. Check back in throughout Winners' Week to learn more about this year's CRC Achievement Awards and CRC Symposium Case Study Competition winners.*

Collaboration winner.png



How do you transition to a paperless credentialing process that enables document sharing throughout your health system, thus reducing rework, waste, and redundancy? How do you leverage your credentialing database to resolve data needs that are beyond the scope of credentialing to strengthen your system's high-quality patient care?

For University Hospitals (UH) Health System in Cleveland, having a dynamic and cohesive team that is able to collaborate with departments outside of credentialing (e.g., IT, marketing, strategic planning, graduate medical education, and the accountable care organization) has helped the health system meet those goals.

"Together, we are able to accomplish far more than we can as individuals," says **Barbara Warstler, MBA, CPMSM, FASPR,** director of medical staff services and credentialing for UH. "We've come together to refine processes and eliminate duplication and waste both within our department and outside of our department."

The organization's efforts and successes were celebrated at the 2018 Credentialing Resource Center Symposium, held in February in Las Vegas, where Warstler accepted the 2018 CRC Excellence in Medical Staff Collaboration award on behalf of William L. Annable, MD, system chief medical officer and chief quality officer and director of the UH Institute for Health Care Quality & Innovation; **Karen Doran, CPMSM,** UH manager of medical staff services and credentialing; and **Lisa M. Zuppert, BA, CPMSM,** UH manager of credentialing information systems.

"That was an amazing experience! I appreciate everyone's kind words and support. It is very humbling to be recognized by such a prestigious group of people! I was a bit starstruck. I've listened to [CRC Symposium faculty members and Excellence in Medical Staff Collaboration presenters Mark Smith, MD, MBA, FACS, and Sally Pelletier, CPMSM, CPCS] at conferences and webinars for years. They are leaders and experts in our field. It was a great experience to share the stage with them!" says Warstler.

The CRC Excellence in Medical Staff Collaboration Award honors an interdisciplinary group whose exemplary teamwork, expansive expertise, and eye for innovation have given rise to a process improvement or other

important medical staff–focused development in their organization and/or in the broader healthcare community.

The award was well-earned by the UH team, according to **William K. Cors, MD, MMM, FAAPL,** senior medical director, Lehigh Valley Health Network, Lehigh Valley Hospital-Pocono in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. Cors, who was a member of the expert panel that selected the UH team as the collaboration category winners in the 2018 CRC Achievement Awards, says, “Organizations that can learn how to collaborate quicker and better will have a significant strategic and competitive advantage in an increasingly demanding and unforgiving healthcare environment. [The UH team] provides a concrete and very real example of collaboration that has served their organization well and that can serve as a model for the rest of the field.”

An executive partner

To accomplish its goals, the UH team stressed to each of its members the importance of teamwork. It was a change in operations in which individuals—knowing their roles—would be held accountable. And with each member approaching the work from different perspectives, each contributed to the team’s overall success.

Along with its emphasis on collaboration, the UH team highlighted that having an ally at the executive level who understood the importance of credentialing was instrumental to its success.

“Dr. Annable, as our executive sponsor, is a tremendous advocate for our team,” says Warstler. “He has done a wonderful job raising awareness of the credentialing process with senior leaders throughout our organization. He has helped other executives understand the credentialing and privileging process and championed the importance of this work as a part of patient safety.”

Having a medical staff leader open to collaboration has helped the organization as a whole recognize the critical work done by MSPs, Doran says. “Dr. Annable is highly respected in our organization, which makes collaboration easier outside of our department. He has helped increase understanding around our health system of the credentialing process and the needs of our department. He has really helped open the lines of communication between our department and our stakeholders.”

The admiration is mutual, says Annable. “I have a great deal of respect for our credentialing team and the work that they do every day to protect our patients. I am glad that our team has been recognized by the Credentialing Resource Center.”

Overcoming challenges with collaboration

The UH team faced challenges every day, like any team, but Zuppert says it always kept its focus on the end goal: protecting patients and continually innovating to increase efficiencies and eliminate waste in the health system.

To always be ready for the next challenge, an effective team must learn to be flexible and think on its feet. “New projects are a constant. We try to be agile and nimble so that we can meet the needs of our ever-changing organization,” says Warstler.

Change in healthcare is difficult but necessary, says Doran. “We are always looking to get to the next level, ahead of the curve.”

The UH team says having collaborative members has helped overcome obstacles. While the individual members may not always agree about every decision, they make it a point to always support each other.

Compromise is an important quality the team embodies; it allows members to build off of each other’s ideas. Holding each other accountable, yet being respectful, is also a valuable quality of the team.

“Our diversity of experiences within the medical staff services field helps with problem-solving. We can all speak freely with each other and we are empowered to speak up,” says Warstler.

Advice for other medical staff offices

To achieve similar success, the UH team encourages other medical staff professionals to be connected within their organizations beyond their departments.

“Think about the bigger picture and how you can contribute to it. Think about the impact that you can make on the larger organization,” says Zuppert.

The UH team always keeps its focus on the patient and patient safety as it does its daily work. While it may be easy to lose sight of patients when you don’t work with them on a daily basis, it is important for medical staff offices to realize why they do what they do.

The UH team hopes that its example can offer ideas and solutions to other organizations to increase their efficiency. Furthermore, its members hope that MSPs will engage with others in their organization to leverage their expertise and add value to the credentialing program and processes.

“If there is a way to automate mundane tasks and rework by leveraging technology so MSPs can focus on more value-added activities for their organization, do it,” says Warstler. “It is important for MSPs to be change leaders in their organization, rather than a change follower!”

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