2024 Urgent Care Award Winners Announced

The Urgent Care Association has announced the latest class of its industry Award recipients. These outstanding individuals are commended for their contributions to the advancement of Urgent Care.

The winners, nominated by their peers and selected by the Urgent Care Foundation Awards Committee, will be recognized across five categories at the 2024 Urgent Care Foundation Celebration in Las Vegas this April: Advocacy, Quality & Safety, Rising Star, Humanitarian, Becky Burrell Unsung Hero, Sean M. McNeeley, MD, FCUCM Advancing the Specialty and Joseph Toscano, MD, FCUCM Inspiring Excellence Award.

**2024 Advocacy Award: Ochsner and Premier Health Private Radiologic Tech (PRT) Program**

The Advocacy Award Recognizes an individual, organization, or company for their outstanding contributions to the association’s grassroots, state, or federal Advocacy efforts. Nominees are not required to be a member of UCA.

- Gerry Cvitanovich, MD (Oschner)
- Lori Noel, MSN, RN, CNL, CNOR (Oschner)
- Kevin DiBenedetto, MD (Premier Health)

Working with the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners, the team led crucial initiatives, navigating the state requirements for PRT practices, and lobbied for program approval, as well as approval of a virtual remote supervision operating procedure.

**Gerry Cvitanovich, MD:** Dr. Cvitanovich established two Louisiana centers, the first non-system-owned to achieve Joint Commission Accreditation. After private equity investment, he renamed the company MHM Urgent Care, expanding rapidly with occupational medicine. In 2017, Ochsner Health acquired MHM, appointing Dr. Gerry as Chief Strategy Officer. A UCA member since 2003, he serves as Treasurer on the UCA Board, and is active in Bylaws and Advocacy Committees.

**Kevin DiBenedetto, MD:** As Premier Health’s founder, Dr. DiBenedetto, along with Dr. Graham Tujague, opened their first clinic in 1999, pioneering Urgent Care-health system partnerships. Premier now manages Urgent Care operations in joint venture clinics across ten states. DiBenedetto spearheads UCA’s initiatives in Antibiotic Stewardship and opioid prescribing guidelines, and advocates for patient-friendly legislation like the Mission Act. Recognized with the Urgent Care Outstanding Achievement Award in 2023, he’s a driving force in industry advancement and patient care.
Lori Noel, MSN, RN, CNL, CNOR: Noel, a master’s prepared Clinical Nurse Leader, leads organization-wide quality improvement initiatives at Ochsner Urgent Care. Responsible for strategic planning, patient relations, risk management, ethics, compliance, and more, she's dedicated to optimizing operational efficiency. Notable achievements include administering two workforce development programs: the Ochsner Urgent Care Private Radiology Technician (PRT) Program and Ochsner Urgent Care MA Certs Medical Assistant Program. She also chairs the Urgent Care, Occupational & Employee Health LEAN program, driving continuous improvement.

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2024 Quality & Safety Award: Founders of UCA Certification & Accreditation Committee
The Quality & Safety Award recognizes an individual, organization, or company engaged in quality/safety-improvement initiatives that focus on improved safety or patient outcomes in the field of Urgent Care medicine. Nominees must be an active member of UCA.

- Peter Lamelas, MD, MBA
- Cindi Lang RN, MS
- Bill Meadows, MD
- Barb Newman
- Nathan Newman, MD, FAAFP
- Steve Sellars, MBA
- Marge Simat (Late)
- Laurel Stoimenoff, PT, CHC

Peter Lamelas, MD, MBA: Dr. Lamelas, a physician and entrepreneur, founded MD Now Urgent Care, overseeing its growth to 59 clinics across Florida in various leadership roles. A dedicated member of multiple medical associations, including the Urgent Care Association and American College of Emergency Physicians, he's twice elected to the UCA Board of Directors, serving as Chairman of the UCA Legislative Committee. Lamelas was also a founding member and past President of the American College of Correctional Physicians, showcasing his extensive leadership in healthcare.

Cindi Lang RN, MS: Lang began her Urgent Care career as Director of SelectCare’s Urgent Care Department. In 2004, along with three physicians, she opened DocNow Urgent Care and served as Chief Operating Officer. Lang has been a member of UCA since its inception, serving as an officer on the UCA Board of Directors, chair of the Accreditation and Certification Committee and member of the UCF Board of Directors. As a Registered Nurse, Quality and Safety were her priority.

Bill Meadows, MD: After practicing emergency medicine early in his career, Dr. Meadows co-founded Physicians Care in 1990. Initially opening two centers in Chattanooga, Physicians Care grew to eight centers throughout East Tennessee that deliver the full scope of primary care services, including Urgent Care and occupational medicine. Meadows was the founding President and board member of UCA. Recently retired, his last career path was as Co-Director of National Healthcare for Fort Oglethrope.

Barbara Newman: Newman, with over 35 years of practice management experience across diverse medical specialties, is well-known for her expertise in startup, policy development, process
improvement and patient-centered care. As VP of Operations at MedSpring Urgent Care (now HCA CareNow), and COO at Millennium Healthcare (now Ochsner Urgent Care), she spearheaded the attainment of Urgent Care Accreditation, pioneering collaboration between UCA and Joint Commission. Barbara’s contributions extend to chairing UCA committees, serving on the Board of Directors, and publishing insightful articles on Urgent Care Accreditation.

**Nathan Newman MD, FAAFP:** Dr. Newman has been recognized as national physician leader, honored by the American Academy of Family Physicians as 2015 National Physician Executive of the Year Robert Graham Award recipient. As Managing Partner and CMO for Conviva Inc. and WellMed Medical Management he has made significant contributions to healthcare quality. As former National Urgent Care Medical Director for Concentra, Dr. Newman played a pivotal role in shaping the Urgent Care Association of America, serving as Vice-President and President.

**Steve Sellars, MBA:** Chief Executive Officer of Premier Health, Sellars oversees 80+ Urgent Care centers in joint ventures with top health systems, providing management support. With 30 years in healthcare, including managed care and health systems, Steve’s expertise fuels Premier Health’s expansion since 2004. As 2016-2017 Board President of the Urgent Care Association (UCA), he received the 2019 UCA Lifetime Membership Award and serves on the Urgent Care Foundation board. Steve, an MBA holder from Louisiana State University, also engages in academia and healthcare organizations' leadership.

**Marge Simat (Late):** Simat, a founding board member of UCA, played a pivotal role in shaping the organization, ensuring accessibility to resources for Urgent Care success. Her influence extended to regional associations like the Northeast Regional Urgent Care Association. Renowned for her high standards, directness, humor, and industry passion, Simat’s legacy lives on through the impactful contributions she made.

“Marge Simat was the one of those people who you liked the minute that you met her,” UCA member Michael Pond, MD said “Without her sharing her knowledge, experience, and processes, it would have taken much longer for me to grow my practice. I feel so fortunate to have met, known and had her a part of my life. She will be missed and fondly remembered by all who crossed her path.”

**Laurel Stoimenoff, PT, CHC:** Stoimenoff, with over 20 years in Urgent Care, served as COO at NextCare Urgent Care during a growth phase. As UCA Board member and committee chair, she shaped industry policies and programs, including UCA’s accreditation. Named UCA CEO in 2017, she later retired but continued supporting Urgent Care as a consultant and accreditation surveyor. A graduate of The Ohio State University, Laurel is certified in healthcare compliance, driven by her enduring passion for the Urgent Care sector.

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**2024 Rising Star Award: Michael Kim, DO, FCUCM | Chris Nugent, MBA, CRA**

The Rising Star Award recognizes the best and brightest under-the-age-of-40 newcomers to the industry. They have a proven track record of leadership, innovation, dedication to community and the Urgent Care industry.
Michael Kim, DO, FCUCM: Dr. Kim, a board-certified family physician, is Associate Medical Director at Northwell Health’s Go Health Urgent Care. He spearheaded UCA accreditation for Go Health’s Fellowship Program and serves as its director. Additionally, he oversees GME program rotations and leads Urgent Care training for Northwell Health’s Department of Family Medicine. Dr. Kim’s leadership extends to clinical analysis and teaching, earning him the Exemplary Achievement Award in 2021. He completed Northwell Health’s Emergency Medicine Service Line’s Clinical Leadership Development Program and his residency at Northwell Health’s Peconic Bay Medical Center.

Chris Nugent, MBA, CRA, RT(R)(CT): Nugent, Director of Radiology at PM Pediatric Care, ascended through hospital leadership, earning an MBA and Certified Radiology Administrator status. Since joining PM Pediatric Care, he has upgraded X-ray equipment, standardized policies, and introduced a limited X-ray licensure program. Recognizing the shortage of Radiologic Technologists, Chris advocates for legislative changes, partnering with UCA and NERUCA. Born with cerebral palsy, he channels his determination into driving innovation and change in the Urgent Care sector, defying expectations and empowering others.

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2024 Humanitarian Award: Graig Straus, DNP, APRN, FCUCM
The Humanitarian Award recognizes those providing significant medical volunteer work that has had a positive impact on a national or international cause or event.

Graig Straus, DNP, APRN, FCUCM: Straus is President and Founder of Rockland Urgent Care Family Health NP, P.C., expanding his practice across multiple New York sites since 2015. Additionally, for seven years, Graig has served as the American Liaison to the Uman Emergency Clinic in Ukraine, providing vital care during crises like measles and COVID-19 outbreaks, and participating in ongoing emergency training. A seasoned EMT and Medical Officer, Graig also volunteers locally, dedicating over 25 years to emergency services.

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2024 Becky Burress Unsung Hero Award: Linda Trevino
The Becky Burress Unsung Hero Award was established to honor “Unsung Hero” Becky Burress, UCA’s very first staff member. Becky passed away suddenly in August 2019, and this Award serves as a permanent honor for all those exceptional front-line staff who work tirelessly and selflessly above and beyond the call of duty in the work they do behind the scenes at their Urgent Care center(s).

Linda Trevino: Linda Trevino, a nationally registered medical assistant multi-tech with 38 years of experience in Urgent Care and occupational medicine, is known for her compassionate care and dedication. Starting as a medical assistant in 1991, she expanded her skills to become an X-ray Tech in 2001. Linda’s commitment extends beyond patients to her colleagues, exemplified by her thoughtful gestures and community outreach efforts. Instrumental in developing occupational medicine services, she continues to thrive at HCA Care Now.
Sean M. McNeeley, MD, FCUCM Advancing the Specialty Award: Jasmeet Bhogal, MD, MBA, FCUCM
First awarded Spring 2022 to Dr. McNeeley, this award is presented to a College of Urgent Care Medicine member with five or more years in Urgent Care or emergency medicine who has made significant and sustained contributions to advancing the specialty of Urgent Care medicine.

Jasmeet Bhogal, MD, MBA, FCUCM: Dr. Bhogal receives the 2024 Sean McNeeley Advancing the Specialty Award for his 14+ years of dedication to Urgent Care Medicine. As President of the College of Urgent Care Medicine and Chair of various committees, he shapes the future of the field. Dr. Bhogal, as Medical Director, emphasizes clinical excellence and mentors future clinicians. Bhogal says this recognition only fuels his determination to contribute further and inspire others.

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Joseph Toscano, MD, FCUCM Inspiring Excellence Award: J.D. Zipkin, MD
First awarded Spring 2023 to Dr. Toscano, this award is presented to a College of Urgent Care Medicine member with five or more years of medical experience in Urgent or emergency medicine who has made significant and sustained contributions to the industry by inspiring excellence.

J.D. Zipkin, MD: Dr. J.D. Zipkin, double board-certified Internist and Pediatrician in Urgent Care medicine, merges technology and healthcare management to drive evidence-based clinical quality. Chairing UCA's Antibiotic Stewardship committee, serving on the Urgent Care Foundation's Board of Trustees, and earning the UCA Quality and Safety Award, he's a national expert. Dr. Zipkin's CDC presentations and commitment to elevating Urgent Care medicine underscore his dedication to advancing the field and inspiring excellence.

To view full biographical information for the award winners and learn more, visit our website.

About the Urgent Care Association
The Urgent Care Association (UCA) is the trade association for Urgent Care, with a membership of more than 4,000 Urgent Care centers representing clinical and business professionals from the United States and abroad.

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