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A healthcare leader today must be a good listener, a strong communicator and a person of great integrity. These attributes must be used first and foremost to attend to the leader's core business. For many of us, that is inpatient and select outpatient services. We need to be sure that these services are being delivered safely and cost effectively. Hospitals and health systems will have an important role to play in a broader care-delivery system, but we cannot be successful influencers/players in a changing healthcare world if we are not performing our core services well.

Among the greatest challenges in healthcare today is ensuring the safety and quality of care provided to all our patients. Because this is a human business, that will always be a key expectation and likely a challenge. Accordingly, healthcare leaders must mentor future healthcare executives who are committed to advancing health services while never losing sight of the incredibly personal nature of the patient-provider experience.

My primary mentor was adamant about developing future leaders. Two of our most memorable career discussions took place when we were attending ACHE education programs together. I am grateful for his commitment to our industry and to my career. ◆

The leaders of our nation's 5,000 hospitals partner regularly with physicians, motivate clinical teams and counsel policymakers. They lead an industry that must continually strive to improve quality, implement new technologies and balance the opportunities innovations provide with fair and adequate access to all.

Today these responsibilities are taking place in an era of unprecedented health policy and regulatory reform. Our nation is at a turning point—one in which our government leaders seem fully supportive of universal coverage for perhaps the first time in history. Today's executives must encourage that support and at the same time be prudent financial stewards, inspirational team leaders, forward-thinking innovators and nimble diplomats. Our healthcare executives must also possess an ability to balance the knowledge that comes from experience with the flexibility needed to meet the demands of this new marketplace. That's one tall order.

At HCA we believe our executives' affiliation with ACHE provides a broader frame of reference for our work and an ongoing opportunity to connect with all segments and perspectives of the industry. ◆



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Today's environment provides incredible opportunities for healthcare executives to get involved in the improvement of healthcare delivery, but these are often disguised within mile-high haystacks of information, regulation and resource constraints. The single most important question healthcare executives must grapple with on a regular basis is how to best invest one's time. That is, taking the right amount of time to search in the hay without getting lost in it.

Given the changes we all know are coming, the academic and practice communities need each other—now more than ever. My own professional role puts me squarely between the two, with a mandate to ensure the road between them is well maintained and traveled. When this works, both sides can benefit tremendously.

ACHE works harder than any organization I know to maintain a balance and keep the relationship between academia and practice strong. The organization is continually working to bring cutting-edge management research to its healthcare executive members and to bring these executives' wisdom into academia, to the benefit of the next generation of leaders. ◆

In healthcare, we always live in waiting of what the next legislative session might bring. As healthcare leaders, our success lies in our vision and the ability to adapt.

The biggest challenge today is adapting our organizations to meet the changing landscape of pay for performance, cost-reduction strategies and the commitment to social responsibility. Being able to navigate the "ship's position" in the new healthcare environment, while being a change agent for internal operational shifts, has never been more critical.

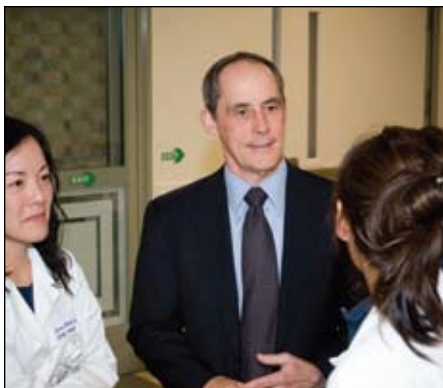
To handle these changes effectively, a leader should possess the following characteristics: Fluidity—the ability to flow with the changing environment; flexibility—the skill to make adjustments as the landscape shifts; and focus—the capacity to concentrate on what matters most and drive cultural change to meet new market demands.

ACHE helps develop my leadership skills by providing multiple forums and opportunities to learn from others and to share best practices. My career goals are always tied to knowledge base and connectivity, and ACHE contributes to this on a regular basis through education offerings, career development and other services that support my growth. ◆



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Healthcare executives are constantly working to find creative best practices to meet the challenge of providing high-quality patient care with limited financial resources. In addition to this challenge, we must be committed to achieving quality outcomes that further our mission and reflect the values of the organizations and communities we serve.

To meet these and other challenges in our dynamic healthcare environment, healthcare leaders must possess certain characteristics. Chief among them is trustworthiness. Our patients must trust that we are doing our best to provide high-quality patient care. Our employees must trust that we will make our best efforts to create a rewarding and healthy workplace. Our physicians must trust that we will create an efficient, safe and high-quality environment for them and their patients. The community must trust that they can depend on us for their ongoing healthcare needs.

ACHE has helped me continue my development as a healthcare leader, including learning best practices that allow our organization to improve patient care and further our mission. My active participation in ACHE also has allowed me to network with other ACHE members and celebrate the positive contributions they are making. ◆

Bringing leadership to the redesign of healthcare delivery for more effective, efficient and equitable healthcare and improved health status of the population is the biggest challenge we face. Healthcare executives—whether in hospitals, physician practices, or other healthcare settings—have a broad view of the system, its strengths and weaknesses and are, therefore, well positioned to lead change.

To be effective, healthcare executives must be active listeners. Driving change in our organizations requires a combination of sharing one's own vision and listening to others' thoughts, hopes, ideas and vision. Integrity also is a vital leadership characteristic, especially in healthcare. We are entrusted to care for people at the most vulnerable times in their lives and to effectively administer significant amounts of public and private money to provide proper care and service. As resources become scarcer, integrity of our healthcare leaders will be even more critical.

ACHE plays an important role in strengthening healthcare management leadership. Successful leaders are those who remain current on both the issues facing the field and strategies to operate our organizations more effectively. ACHE is an important resource on both of these fronts. ◆



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Healthcare executives today continually search for effective ways to manage increasing demand for services with ever-decreasing resources. Improvements in technology, consumer demand for new treatments and unexpected issues that divert resources from long-term planned investments have led to skyrocketing costs for healthcare organizations. We should view these issues as opportunities to act strategically for future success and challenge our staffs to find more efficient, cost-effective methods of running their piece of the organization.

Executives who are open to new ideas from staff members and empower them demonstrate that staff opinions are valued. In addition, challenging employees by taking them outside their comfort zone and instilling them with confidence and realistic expectations provide them with opportunities to accomplish great things.

Through my membership in ACHE, I found mentors who helped me grow as a healthcare leader. I particularly enjoy networking with my civilian counterparts—sharing with them the operational side of military medicine. ACHE also provides me with educational opportunities that are relevant to my career development in the United States Air Force. ◆

Life is all about change, but it now seems to be occurring at warp speed. In the United States more than 8,000 people turn 60 every day. This means we are simultaneously dealing with baby boomers' retirement from the healthcare work force and the aging population's increasing demands for care. We have long heard about a nursing shortage, but there are other impending shortages as well.

Baptist Health System is actively addressing these work force shortages by operating a hospital-based school. In operation for more than 100 years, the school provides academic education to prepare RNs, licensed vocational nurses, surgical technologists, radiologic technologists, ultrasonographers, and MRI technologists. In addition, the school offers vascular registry reviews and short courses to prepare perioperative nurses, CNAs, and phlebotomists. Over the past four years, we have grown enrollment from 200 to more than 500 students.

My focus on education doesn't end there. ACHE has facilitated *my* learning through a variety of educational programs and local, regional and national networking opportunities. Healthcare leaders must be adaptable and possess a sense of humor. We have to learn to embrace new structures and new technologies...and have some fun along the way! ◆