



# Chief Executive Officer

*A publication of the American College of Healthcare Executives CEO Circle*

## WINTER 2020

### Leading in Crisis: A CEO's Firsthand Account of the Las Vegas Shooting

*Todd P. Sklamberg*

No U.S. hospital in recent history has cared for more gunshot victims at one time than Las Vegas' Sunrise Hospital & Medical Center on the night of Oct. 1, 2017. For its physicians, clinical and nonclinical team members, first responders, and the entire Las Vegas community, the tragedy that night was beyond all comprehension.

Sunrise Hospital & Medical Center is the largest acute care facility in Nevada. A 762-bed adult and children's hospital, it is a regional center for tertiary care and features a Level II trauma center. It is the closest hospital to the Las Vegas Strip.

It would have been a regular Sunday night in the facility's ED and trauma center. For most CEOs serving large metropolitan areas, it's not uncommon to be paged for individual emergency events that involve the inevitable injuries associated with large crowds or perhaps a bus crash requiring a visit to the trauma center.

Sunrise Hospital's senior leaders and staff received a page shortly after 10 p.m. during the Las Vegas Route 91 Harvest festival advising of a mass casualty. The number of victims and extent of injuries from the incident at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, just 4.8 miles from Sunrise Hospital, were unknown at the time. What followed tested the mettle of the Sunrise Hospital team, but they were prepared to rise to the occasion.

Ambulances, cars, pickup trucks and taxis flooded the Sunrise Hospital ambulance bay. Over 100 physicians and more than 200 nurses responded to assist over 240 patients, arriving at Sunrise Hospital for care in a span of two hours. Over 80 surgeries were performed during the first five days (58 of those in the first 24 hours), 516 blood products were administered and 50 crash carts were deployed within one hour.

How did Sunrise Hospital bring order and stability to the chaos? Our greatest tools were strength, perseverance and hope. At every turn during its response, Sunrise Hospital staff displayed these traits, benefiting its teams, patients and their families.

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LEADING WELL

### Five Tenets of Cybersecurity for Chief Executives

*Rod Piechowski*

Significant security incidents are a near universal experience among U.S. healthcare organizations, according to the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society 2019 Cybersecurity Survey. "Bad actors" initiate many of these incidents by leveraging something as innocuous as email to compromise the integrity of their targets. Furthermore, although the survey identified many positive advances in healthcare cybersecurity practices, it also found that complacency can often seep into good habits and put organizations at risk. In light of these findings, it is clear that the healthcare ecosystem has good intentions when it comes to cybersecurity defenses but must remain diligent to ensure security. The following five tenets can help senior leaders drive strong cybersecurity practices throughout their organizations.

***Ensure technology is one of multiple tools to solve security issues.*** When most people think about cybersecurity, they often only focus on the role technology plays in protecting data.

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#### Leading in Crisis (continued from Page 1)

### Communicating in a Sea of Fear and Uncertainty

Sunrise Hospital prioritized the flow of structured communication to families from the onset of the crisis. CEOs, physicians and nurses are empathetic leaders who are well-trained to share the most difficult of messages with families. The majority of the organization's everyday family interactions are tight and contained. There are certainties: We know the identity of the patient and whether the EHR is accessible. Hospital and health system staff members are prepared with appropriate responses to family in the event of an escalating situation, yet 99.99 percent of those fall into the category of certainty.

Imagine, however, the uncertainty the shooting victims' families experienced when they arrived at Sunrise Hospital desperately searching for answers, with no idea if their loved ones were at Sunrise Hospital or elsewhere in Las Vegas. Were their loved ones even still alive? Compounding the situation was the fact that many were unfamiliar with the city, its healthcare system or Sunrise Hospital.

To alleviate this uncertainty, the hospital organized ongoing updates for the families every 30 minutes, starting at midnight on Oct. 2. It shared information from its CEO, and attempted to give families some sense of hope that their loved ones were alive and would be provided the best medical and traumatic care available.

Initially, 92 of the victims had no identification, as during the attack clutches, purses and wallets were displaced. Our Incident Command

Center team found answers using an old-fashioned approach: comparing families' descriptions and photos to our team's own visual descriptors. This process accelerated patient identification, with tattoos, piercings and even boots becoming definitive identifiers.

### The Right Team at the Right Time at the Right Place

Communicating and connecting with the Sunrise Hospital team throughout the process was of paramount importance. Expressing gratitude to our team for being there at the right time was mission critical. Many people may not have considered the traumatic stress our team experienced that night, so being there for them was necessary. Reassuring our team that all resources were at their disposal made a significant impact, as care for some victims was expected to span an extended time.

Sunrise Hospital had the right team at the right time at the right place. It all started with the hospital initially establishing a triage process in the ED that was similar to combat triage, enabling the hospital to provide immediate, lifesaving care for an unprecedented patient volume in the following ways:

- A physician experienced in tactical situations made an early decision to designate areas in the ED for specific care.
- ED and trauma physician leaders developed a strategy for stabilizing patients in the ED before immediately transferring them to other areas in the hospital per primary injury category. The

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- hospital dispatched subspecialists to units housing patients requiring their expertise.
- ED and trauma physicians took the lead on the immediate triage of victims, directing them to appropriate areas.
- A trauma physician took the lead on surgical triage and directed surgical strategy.
- ED nurses rapidly reprioritized patients and initially engaged in the resuscitation of multiple patients until additional staff arrived.
- Leaders took a pause in care to organize a system response, a critical factor in maintaining control during the crisis.
- Paramedics and flight crews on-site supported Sunrise Hospital staff. The Sunrise care team used intraosseous infusion to more effectively and efficiently place IVs.
- Clinical staff self-dispatched to support the anticipated need at Sunrise Hospital and upon arrival, took on the role or task needed at that time.

- Pulmonary and critical care staff were available and engaged in ongoing care needs to leverage trauma team capabilities.

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Sunrise Hospital also demonstrated many nonclinical strengths throughout the crisis:

- An experienced hospital team led the Incident Command Structure.
- Early in the crisis, the hospital established a family staging area to separate families from the clinical unit, allowing staff to ensure care for a large volume of patients.
- Ongoing updates at regular times helped manage families' anxiety and expectations.

- CEO-led updates assured families that the top leader was addressing their concerns.

Over the past two years, Sunrise Hospital has invested in educating and providing information to the National Institutes of Health and various emergency preparedness organizations throughout the country. From the New York City Emergency Preparedness team to local EMS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and multiple organizations, we have shared our crisis response best practices in hopes of helping others be crisis-ready.

In December 2019, Sunrise Hospital opened a new, state-of-the-art tower that includes a new and expanded trauma and adult ED and ambulance bay. The project was designed with many of the lessons learned and processes put in place that tragic Sunday night. The brick and mortar and unit design are important, but more so is our entire workforce, standing ready and forever #SunriseStrong.

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