



Key Note Address: Lloyd H. Dean, President/CEO
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Thank you, Anna, for that very kind introduction. And thank you all for the opportunity to be with you today. I believe there is nothing more important than this conference and the work we all are doing to redefine human health to include a healthy environment, a healthy planet.

Rachel Carson said: “The human race is challenged more than ever before to demonstrate our mastery – not of nature but of ourselves.” Think about the past year: the oil spill in the Gulf, the radiation plumes in the Pacific trade winds, the escalating number of severe weather events in our own country and around the globe, and how as a nation, we are still waiting for the first meaningful steps to counter global climate change. It feels as if we are meeting just in time.

Today, we can’t solve all those problems, but I do want to speak about three areas where we can make a difference:

First, I want to share with you why this is a time of great opportunity for all of us who see environmental health as part of the healing care we provide.

Second, I want to share with you some of our experience at Catholic Healthcare West in preparing for healthcare reform and the role of sustainability in those preparations.

And third, I want to suggest some actions that all of us gathered here today can take and some issues I hope we will address.

A Time of Hope and Possibility

I know that if we listen to the news out of Washington right now, we would conclude that the future of health care reform is uncertain. But despite the difficulties and controversy, health care reform is proceeding. The largest reforms to American health care since the enactment of Medicare are in place. We’ve taken the first concrete steps toward health care that is more accessible, affordable and just.

And even though the national parties are arguing about reform, both Democrats and Republicans will tell you, privately, that the nation has reached a point where change is essential and unavoidable.

The pressures on the healthcare industry have brought us to the tipping point. Change will come regardless of the debate, distraction and controversy. The health reform law is really aimed at modernizing the health delivery system – making higher quality care easier to access at a lower cost.

This modernization will call upon us to provide comprehensive care that is focused on prevention. It will call upon all of us to look out from our hospitals, care centers, and clinics to the communities we serve and consider the effects of the environment on the health of those we serve.

Winston Churchill said: “A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

Despite today’s challenges I see this as time of great hope and opportunity for the future of health care and of environmental sustainability.

Catholic Healthcare West’s Experience

We must be ready for the changes to come. I know that many of you here today are preparing your organizations for the reformed healthcare system. And I want to share with you some of the work we’ve done at Catholic Healthcare West.

For those who aren’t familiar with us, we are a three state, faith-based, not-for-profit system of 40 hospitals, and numerous clinics and trauma centers serving a population spanning more than 22 million people in California, Arizona and Nevada.

Our mission, vision and values drive our commitment to social and environmental responsibility – to improving the quality of life in our communities and beyond. In 2010 we committed \$1.3 Billion in charity care, community benefits and unreimbursed patient care.

Our Preparations for Reform

Part of our mission calls for speaking on behalf of those in need. For that reason we have been advocating for a reformed healthcare system since our founding in the mid eighties. And we have been deeply engaged in the current push for reform even before the 2008 election. We did so not out of partisanship or because we believe the ACA is an ideal solution.

We supported the administration’s efforts because we, like many others, believe America’s health care system is broken, that sweeping change in some form is inevitable, and that the Affordable Care Act as it was conceived represents a good and rational step towards a health care system that is affordable, just and compassionate.

We began preparing early for health care reform, because we saw that change was required regardless of the legislative outcome. Over the past decade we transformed our ministry to focus on specific measures in quality care, community benefit, financial performance and recognition as an employer of choice in our communities.

In the past four years, we’ve raised the quality and safety of our inpatient care against national quality measures substantially, and our severe sepsis prevention program has saved nearly 1,000 lives and reduced costs by more than \$36 million over the last three years.

Today, among many other efforts, we're redefining our care models to meet the full spectrum of healthcare needs in our communities and broadening the scope and outreach of our community benefit work.

How we contribute to the quality of life and the environment in our communities has always been a key measure of our success and it will continue to be so as we move forward. At Catholic Healthcare West we recognize the interdependence between human health and the environment we live in.

Our Environmental and Sustainability Work

Over the past 15 years, CHW has woven environmental and sustainability programs into the work we do each day.

Here are a few examples:

We have in place programs and policies governing the management and reduction of solid, medical and hazardous waste.

In 2010 through our single use medical device reprocessing program, we eliminated 162,650 lbs of medical waste from the waste stream for a fiscal savings of more than \$5 million.

We have worked with MedShare to divert over 70,000 pounds of reusable medical supplies and equipment from California landfills to those most in need in the developing world.

In 2005 we transitioned to PVC/DEHP free intravenous bags, solutions and tubing. With this effort we are eliminating approximately 840 tons of this toxic material from both the patient care setting and the waste stream.

We've implemented both environmentally preferable purchasing and sustainable building programs.

We have energy and water reduction programs that are saving tens of millions of dollars each year at our facilities.

We are donating all usable equipment to charities at home and abroad.

We are supporting and promoting food systems that are ecologically sound, economically viable and socially responsible.

The Importance of Collaboration

We were helped in this work by organizations like Health Care Without Harm, which we joined in 1997, and Practice Greenhealth, which we joined in 2002. We first began setting environmental policy in all

our hospitals in 1996 through our association with Ceres and in 1997 we published our first sustainability report.

As the saying goes – you can't manage what you don't measure, and the mere act of producing a public report on sustainability engages the entire organization. The process of reporting has helped us see our ministry with new eyes, from our governance, to the safety of our care and workplaces, to the environmental impact of our purchases, our buildings, our waste -- to how well we are engaging our communities in improving their health and the health of their environments.

Health care is an integral part of the global community and our positive and negative impacts are felt locally and globally. It is imperative that we measure, manage and report our efforts in a manner that allows all of us to see our true impacts on our world and our people.

I urge all of you here to join this effort by embracing the Healthier Hospitals Agenda, setting goals for improved performance and reporting your progress and achievements.

What We Must Do Together

Sustainability reporting is a vital step for any organization, but we must do more if we are to meet the pressing challenges we face today. The lingering effects of the recession and the need to prepare for a reformed healthcare system are demanding attention and resources from healthcare leaders. These competing priorities make it doubly difficult for them to make the investments necessary to “go green.”

All of us must take away from this meeting the courage and resolve to be advocates in our organizations. To help leadership see the value of sustainable practices in terms of their quality, safety and fiscal outcomes. To help them see environmental quality as a key element of preventive care.

For example, hospitals are the second most intensive energy-using buildings in the U.S. Implementing renewable energy is both a good business practice and a way of showing our commitment to the health of our communities. Please consider working with our partners, Practice Greenhealth and Citigroup, who are launching the Healthcare Renewable Energy Initiative here at CleanMed.

The delivery of healthcare needs to be made safer for everyone – healthcare workers, patients, community residents and for the ecosystem that supports us all. Large systems need to take the lead in driving the market for green chemistry, clean energy and safer products. We have been seeking to do this at CHW in cooperation with the Healthier Hospitals Initiative. We all need to work with our vendors to better understand the chemicals that go into their products and then ask for safer substitutions where possible.

Nationally we must support the legislative retooling of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), now up for renewal in Congress. The Act has remained unchanged for 35 years. In all this time countless chemicals have come on the market – there are now 80,000; and the EPA only requires testing of 200.

And in the cause of safety, we need to lead by example in preparing patients and our communities to be resilient and best cope with the anticipated health impacts of climate change.

Finally, we must all work to see that environmental and sustainability efforts become part of the emerging healthcare value equation. For example, all states should define community benefit in a way that recognizes environmental health initiatives as part of an institution's mission.

More broadly, as the Affordable Care Act is implemented in the coming years, it will be critical that the quality standards defining effective care include prevention, safety, sustainability, and the environmental health of our workplaces and communities. And we must work to change the terms of the environmental debate across this nation.

Too often sustainability is seen in terms of how much wealth or productivity will be lost if we save a resource or if we prevent pollution and shrink our carbon footprint.

But we know the real bottom line in the sustainability debate is not cost versus benefit; it is harm versus health.

Across the country, hospitals and health systems are growing in their understanding of our interrelationship with the Earth and the gift of healing it brings.

The environmental movement in healthcare is gaining momentum. It's taking hold in unimaginable and creative ways. Caregivers, health systems, group purchasing organizations, vendors, and environmental organizations are collaborating to keep the momentum going, to create models of healthcare that work, and to nurture the ecological sensitivities sorely needed in the 21st century.

So this is a good time – a time of hope and opportunity for all of us concerned with healing our patients, our communities, our world.

In closing, I want to thank all of you here for what you've done and will do to make healthcare more effective and comprehensive – for the physicians, nurses and staff who deliver it, for the patients who receive it and for all who are part of the great global community that, finally, we all must heal and protect.