



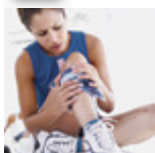
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Tuesday, December 9, 2008



Make Shift from Emergency Care:

USA Today Blog on Urgent Care

Posted by [Alan Ayers](#) in [Urgent Care](#)

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In the Forum piece "[Ease ER overload](#)," Kevin Pho pointed out that the strain on our nation's emergency rooms is growing. Although this is correct, the problem is not a new one (The Forum, Wednesday).

Pho was correct when he stated that the appeal of a one-stop shop and the limited availability of primary care physicians after hours and on weekends have led to an increase in ER visits. But when he suggests that easing this strain involves clearing serious hurdles, I must object.

When a more convenient, lower-cost alternative to the emergency room is made available, consumers will use it. This alternative exists today in the form of urgent care. A 2000 New York University study stated that nearly 75% of ER visits could be treated in a low-acuity setting and do not represent actual emergencies. The proliferation of urgent care clinics is helping to reduce ER overload, allowing doctors to focus on trauma care and true emergencies.

What urgent care clinics provide is more than just overflow relief. These facilities are largely staffed by board-certified physicians, experienced in family medicine, trauma care and other specialties.

One such organization is Concentra, which has hundreds of urgent care clinics. It is delivering expert care for conditions such as fractures, sprains, lacerations and pediatric infectious diseases. Urgent care treats a variety of injuries and illnesses, in a setting typically found in a primary care physician's office, and in less time and for less money than the ER.

Urgent care is a growing alternative to the emergency room that offers more than just immediate care; it delivers quality and skilled treatment and a hope for better care for all.

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Alan works closely with our medical center teams on a range of initiatives, including our Urgent Care service, patient feedback programs, and medical center operations.

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