

## CASE STUDY

# UCLA Health



# Collaboration, leadership and data improve patient care

UCLA Health's leadership trio works to ensure continuous, sustained improvement

Many health centers are focused on improving patient experience and reducing hospital-acquired conditions, patient safety issues and readmissions. UCLA Health is no different on that score. However, the top-ranking academic health center does have one key differentiator: a unified trio of leaders who, since the spring of 2014, have been guiding the organization to repeated successes in UCLA Health's journey of continuous, sustained improvement.

## Creating a framework for success

When Robert Cherry, MD, arrived at UCLA Health in January 2014, he stepped into the newly created role of chief medical and quality officer. With his primary directive to lead a systemwide quality improvement effort, he tapped into UCLA's culture to create MOVERS, a framework to facilitate positive change in six focus areas (see page two).

"What was striking to me when I first got here in 2014 was the patient-centeredness of the organization and how people went out of their way to actually be kind—and they took real accountability for healing humankind one patient at a time," he says. According to Cherry, MOVERS is a way of linking the positive aspects of UCLA's culture to a quality strategy and dashboard that enables sustainable improvements long-term.



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It's a strategy that's working well for UCLA Health, as the efforts implemented under the MOVERS umbrella have driven successes that earned the health system accolades from patients and in national rankings.

"The MOVERS strategy has survived more than seven years and a number of leadership transitions," he says. "It's stood the test of time."

### Collaborating for change

Fueling its strength and longevity are Cherry and his MOVERS co-facilitators: Chief Nursing Executive Karen Grimley, PhD, RN, and Chief Operating Officer Richard Azar.

They each bring broad healthcare experience to the table and share a commitment to relationship-based care: treating each other, their colleagues and patients with respect and kindness, which is part of the core mission of UCLA Health.

"We create a safe space for each other," says Grimley. "One where we can openly share our concerns and be frank with each other," which is a trait she notes that is not always easy to find.

Their comfort level with each other is conveyed to the larger organization. "The trust and respect that we have for each other brings honest communication and stronger partnership," Azar says. "We truly value our relationships and try to model those traits for our teams who problem-solve and collaborate together each and every day."

The three start each workday together at 7:30 a.m. with a meeting (in person, if possible, but otherwise virtually) to



**Robert Cherry, MD**  
Chief Medical and Quality Officer



**Karen Grimley, PhD, RN**  
Chief Nursing Executive



**Richard Azar**  
Chief Operating Officer

level-set the day and check in with each other. Grimley, Azar and Cherry now serve more as facilitators that kick things off and keep things on track, while individuals and individual departments innovate and manage their own projects related to MOVERS goals.

"One of the things that we are very cognizant of is not creating kingdoms and fiefdoms," Cherry says, emphasizing efforts to break down silos within UCLA Health. "The three of

### What MOVERS stands for

MOVERS is a strategy supported with a dashboard that provides UCLA Health with a systemwide framework to meet and determine goals around these six focus areas:

- M** Reducing risk-adjusted *Mortality*
- O** Improving process and *Outcomes* measures
- V** Implementing *Value-based* redesign
- E** Enhancing the patient *Experience*
- R** Reducing preventable *Readmissions*
- S** Strengthening patient *Safety*

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us are not only the standard bearers but we also allow the people in different [departments] to innovate and take some calculated risks and, really, support new models of care for patients and for each other,” he says.

### Achieving goals with data and insights

While MOVERS is now engrained in the daily fabric throughout the organization, the trio still sets goals for the health system each year. “Although MOVERS is not changing, the organizational emphasis based on our changing needs is—and that keeps people excited because everybody wants to work on something new and innovative and actually see the results,” Cherry says.

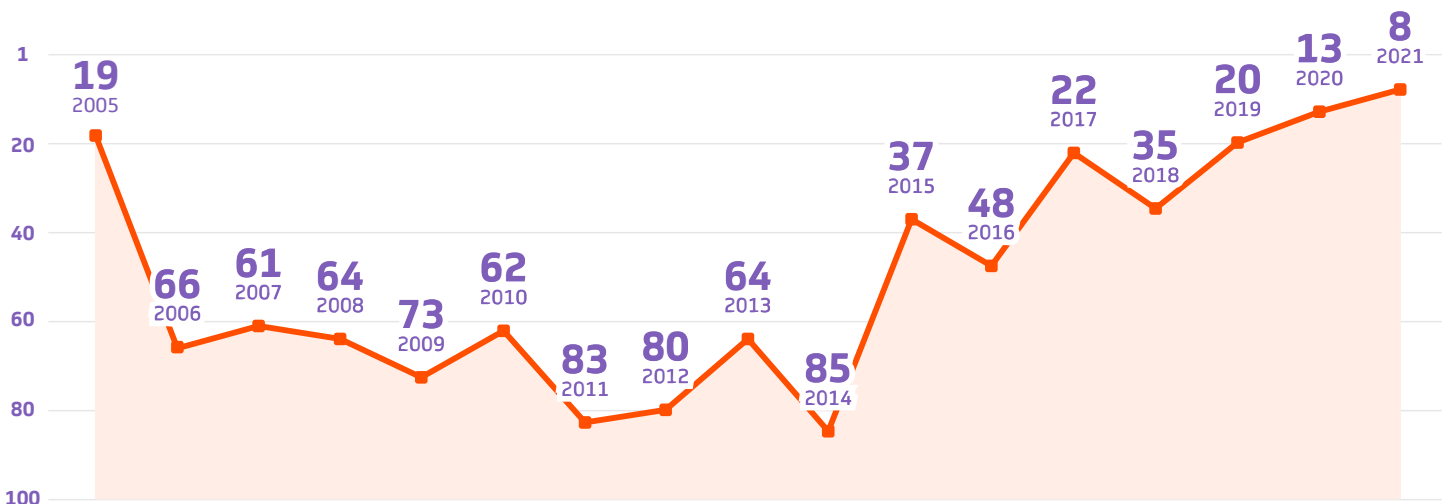
Collectively, Azar, Cherry and Grimley were pleased to see that the integrity of the MOVERS strategy held up even with the additional stresses placed on everyone because of COVID. “We were quite successful in executing on our 2020 goals despite the inherent



challenges with COVID unexpectedly thrust upon us,” Cherry says. Informing their annual goals are the measures UCLA Health is judged by from organizations such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Leapfrog, *U.S. News & World Report* and Vizient.

The trio also depends on Vizient’s consultants and experts, such as Vizient’s Member Networks, Performance Improvement Collaboratives and Sg2, for ideas,

## Historical overall rank in the Q&A Scorecard





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to learn about trends and act as a sounding board. “I actually use the Vizient Chief Nursing Officer Advisory Board Network not only as a sounding board but as an opportunity to explore best practices and new ideas,” says Grimley.

UCLA Health is a strong supporter of sharing ideas and best practices within the organization and to the other University of California health systems—a practice that’s thoroughly endorsed by Azar, Cherry and Grimley.

“If we were competitive with the other UC systems, we’d be holding information tightly and guarding it for fear that someone else is going to use it and do better than we are, but that really isn’t the case,” Cherry says. “I think everyone is generally happy for everybody else’s success.” ■

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### About UCLA Health

**UCLA Health** is among the world’s most comprehensive academic health systems, with a mission to provide state-of-the-art patient care, train top medical professionals and support pioneering research and discovery. It includes four hospitals on two campuses—Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, UCLA Mattel Children’s Hospital and the UCLA Stewart and Lynda Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital in the Westwood area of Los Angeles, and UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center—and more than 250 community clinics throughout Southern California. UCLA Health also includes the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. UCLA Health hospitals ranked #1 in Los Angeles, #1 in California and #3 in the nation in the 2021-22 Best Hospitals assessment by *U.S. News & World Report*.

## Applying MOVERS to ambulatory care

### Mortality

In UCLA Health’s continuing effort to improve sepsis mortality, it focuses on engaging in palliative care efforts and care goals earlier and earlier in the ambulatory environment.

### Outcomes

Monitor patient flow through length of stay and focus on access issues in emergency departments.

### Value

Clinical redesign efforts are informed by population health needs and consider how UCLA can provide greater value and outcomes by implementing affordable efficiencies and care in more expensive care lines, such as quaternary service lines.

### Experience

UCLA launched its “We listen. We care.” campaign to encourage patients to share with UCLA if they do not feel comfortable, respected and safe. In 2020, UCLA also instituted real-time text messaging for patients so they can provide feedback about their experience and get immediate remedy from UCLA staff.

### Readmissions

A new readmissions reduction dashboard that incorporates social vulnerabilities data has been implemented to further reduce the incidence of readmission.

### Safety

Laboratory measures are used to determine safety issues. For example, measures indicate if a patient is being transfused appropriately or whether an insulin regimen is managing glucose levels as intended.

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