

Vol. 1, Issue 11

Payers & Providers is published every Thursday by Payers & Providers Publishing, LLC. An annual subscription is \$99 a year. It may be delivered by e-mail either as a PDF or an electronic newsletter without attachments.

All advertising, subscriber and editorial inquiries:

(877) 248-2360
info@payersandproviders.com

Mailing address:

818 N. Hollywood Way, Suite B
 Burbank, CA 91505

Website

www.payersandproviders.com

Twitter

www.twitter.com/payersproviders

LinkedIn

www.linkedin.com/in/payersandproviders

Editorial Board/Op-Ed
 Contributors:

Steven T. Valentine, President,
 The Camden Group

Ross Goldberg, Chairman of the
 Board, Los Robles Regional
 Medical Center

Jim Lott, Executive Vice President,
 Hospital Association of Southern
 California

Elaine Batchlor, M.D., Chief
 Medical Officer, L.A. Care Health

Keith Richman, M.D., Executive
 Vice President, Lakeside
 Community Healthcare

Publisher & Editor-in-Chief:
 Ron Shinkman

editor@payersandproviders.com

Healthcare Needs A Healing Process Beyond Reform, The Public's Trust Must be Regained

The biggest issue facing healthcare today isn't the reform being debated in Washington. It isn't cost, access or quality. It isn't shrinking margins, workforce shortages, malpractice insurance or any of the other much ballyhooed topics which populate the evening news. It is something much more fundamental to any relationship.

It is a loss of trust.

Over the past quarter century, Americans have lost trust in the healthcare system just as we have lost trust in so many of the other institutions and amenities in which we historically believed (think education and government for starters). Until trust is restored, nothing we as healthcare leaders do or say will matter.

It is not surprising that people have stopped trusting us. Why should they believe in a system that they feel no longer believes in them? Costs have skyrocketed, quality is elusive to measure, 47 million are uninsured, medical errors are front page news and "big business" has kidnapped something once believed to be personal and sacred. There is no need to get bogged down in a useless debate over the validity of these accusations. Instead, we are better off acknowledging that as an industry concerned with saving lives, it's time we focused on how to save our own hides before the real revolt takes place.

As far back as 2002 the **Harvard University School of Public Health** sponsored a symposium examining the erosion of trust in our nation's healthcare system and in 2006 the **American Hospital Association** issued a paper entitled "Trust Counts Now." Those two groups, and others equally committed to this chilling issue, challenge all organizations to adopt ethical principles, pursue transparency in everything they do and make trust a fundamental precept of corporate governance.

If healthcare is to regain the public's long-lost trust, we can add to that list at least eight other core imperatives. We must:

- Put the wants and needs of the patient or member first
- Admit that medicine is an imperfect science
- Candidly acknowledge the inherent relationship between cost and quality
- Demystify healthcare by adopting plain speak and openness in how we conduct business
- Speak more about ethics and what we stand for
- Produce and celebrate the heroes among us
- Develop and follow a code of ethics; and
- Strive to return to a time of public purpose over private gain.



By Ross K.
 Goldberg

Restoring public trust won't be easy. That's why **Michael Josephson** of the **Josephson Institute of Ethics** in Los Angeles called trust the "most complex and most fragile of all of the ethical principles contained in the idea of character." Those in our industry unable to understand this basic reality no longer deserve equal

time.

Think about the people you trust most in your life. Chances are that traits such as honesty, integrity, promise keeping and loyalty are fundamental to how they conduct their lives and how they interact with others. How many of us can candidly say that our industry or that our own institutions, every day and in every way, follows those same behaviors in everything we do? Until we practice them as instinctively as fish swim, we'll continue to be met by a skeptical public who wonders what happened to an industry they once cherished and wants so badly to cherish again.

Ross Goldberg is chairman of the board of trustees at Los Robles Hospital and Medical Center in Thousand Oaks, and president of Kevin/Ross Public Relations in Westlake Village.

Op-ed submissions of up to 550 words are welcomed. Please e-mail proposals to editor@payersandproviders.com, or call (877) 248-2360, ext. 3.