

Looking Back— With a View Towards Tomorrow

by Russ Bodoff

NHIA President & Chief Executive Officer

It is hard to believe that the end of the year will soon be upon us. Looking back at what we've accomplished in 2011, it's clear that our achievements represent the contributions of many committed alternate-site infusion stakeholders pulling together around a common set of values and a shared vision for the future. And yet we know that in the coming year we will face changes that will bring forth new challenges for our industry. We also know, without question, that the health care and budget debates in Washington will drive change in varied directions that are still to be determined—down paths that could greatly impact our current business models. Keeping this “uncertainty” of what's ahead in mind, I believe that this year's accomplishments will serve as invaluable groundwork to assist us in addressing the challenges we will likely face in the days to come.

The reintroduction in early 2011 of the *Medicare Home Infusion Therapy Coverage Act* concurrently in the Senate ([S.1203](#)) and House ([H.R.2195](#)) to provide Medicare beneficiaries with meaningful access to home infusion therapy, was an important achievement—and will remain a high priority. By leveraging the positive findings that emerged from the 2010 Government Accountability Office (GAO) study (that demonstrated home infusion therapy provides cost savings and quality care with no unusual utilization) and by securing the exciting added support of the AARP in 2011, we have now set the stage for a better chance than ever to be heard. At the same time, with multiple paths needed to further pursue a Medicare fix, we've worked relentlessly with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) to advance the potential for a project that will help demonstrate the savings and quality care provided by home infusion therapy—efforts that will continue into 2012.

Another strategically valuable accomplishment in 2011 was the launch of the *NHIA Standards for Ethical Practice*. While waste, fraud and abuse has and will remain a central focus of regulatory organizations, NHIA members' attestation to these standards will unquestionably further strengthen our collective message of commitment to ethical practice for our industry. The number of member company attestations have started to grow considerably as this year has progressed—and I strongly urge any member organization that has not yet signed on, to do so soon.

We can also be proud of the recently released *2010 NHIA Provider Survey: Comprehensive Aggregate Analysis Report*—the first-ever, far-reaching collection of data about the size and scope of the alternate-site infusion industry! This groundbreaking study represents just the first phase of the *NHIA Industry-Wide Data Initiative*, a multi-year data collection effort intended to establish financial, operational, human resource and clinical benchmarks that will eventually be utilized to enhance patient care and chart the long-term growth of the alternate-site infusion industry. This is a vital effort that an even greater number of members must embrace, and become engaged in, as we move forward.

Yes, progress is clearly being made—but looking ahead, we need to constantly be aware that we still face obstacles in Washington, both from a budget perspective and from those who do not recognize the value of home infusion therapy. This means we need to be more aggressive in our efforts to raise the visibility of our story, and change the mindset of government officials. We must attain additional data that reflects the savings home infusion can provide, identify the ever-important patient stories that will bring our message to life and continue the pressure on our elected representatives. We also look forward to the results from the major home infusion study being conducted by MedPAC, due in June 2012, with the belief that it will significantly help to build needed support in Washington.

Additionally, while the Medicare legislation fix continues to be high on our agenda, the NHIA Board, at its strategic retreat this past September with the Future of Infusion Advisory Council (FIAC) members, determined that outreach to private payers needs to now also become a major priority for the Association. The design of a new initiative, to establish “proof” to better demonstrate the value proposition of home infusion to payers, is currently under development—with part of this effort ultimately producing tools that can be used by NHIA members in their own negotiations with payers.

The accomplishments I've mentioned in this column are but a few highlights of a very productive year. I am proud, and grateful, for the energy and dedication of our NHIA staff, the Board of Directors, the members of the FIAC and all NHIA members, for what we've achieved—and I am eager to further collaborate around the opportunities and challenges that are ahead. As always, I welcome your feedback and look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas on the member services you would most value from NHIA. As the home infusion field continues to evolve, my goal, first and foremost, is to ensure that NHIA services are helping our members be as successful as possible.

I wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season.

