

Safely and Successfully Navigating Whatever's Around the Bend

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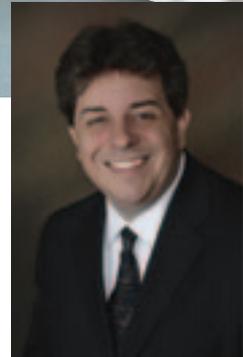
About a year ago, my teenage son (“Jake”) turned old enough in the Commonwealth of Virginia to attain a driver’s permit—which, with much unprompted studying on his part and detailed strategic research about specific requirements he had to meet, led to us walking out of the department of motor vehicles *on the day he was eligible to take the learner’s exam*, with a passing grade on the written test and his driver’s permit in hand! Jake, both excited and proud beyond belief, was on his way towards a sacred adult right-of-passage (sure to be linked in a variety of ways to his future undertakings): becoming a licensed driver. I, too, was equally excited and proud—and just a tad bit nauseous, as I pondered the immediate and long-term work ahead to teach him how to safely drive, while always being well prepared for the uncertain twists, curves and risks of the roadway.

You must remember that type of excitement—right? Maybe it was when you secured your own driver’s permit, and then license. Or perhaps it was when you taught your own child how to successfully—and safely—drive. There is a unique sense of exhilaration that comes with the freedom of driving out into the “great big world,” along with a deep pride in being able to master the skills and risk management abilities necessary to make such an endeavor possible, even amid the often unforeseen road ahead. As I began to take Jake out for his driving lessons, beyond the technical skill discussions and practice, we spent many hours covering “defensive driving strategies.” In the midst of going out in the day and at night, in varying weather and on a wide diversity of roads, at different speeds, I always emphasized the reality that the road holds many unknowns—and the driver must be vigilantly prepared to adjust and safely respond to the uncertainty that is sure to come around the next bend. Yes, there is much excitement about the numerous places you can go, but only as long as it is grounded in savvy negotiation of the road you must traverse!

In many ways, all this reminds me of what home and specialty infusion providers and businesses are currently facing, as they look to travel down the diverse roads of opportunities and challenges that a rapidly developing health care environment presents. There is the excitement about new possibilities for the delivery of infusion care and engaging in creative partnerships, as stakeholders across the continuum are exploring novel approaches for better advancing the home site of care. Yet at the same time, there continue to be a whole host of reimbursement, regulatory and legislative factors—including those that are covered within this issue of INFUSION (see the Table of Contents on page 2) that are rapidly driving our shifting health care terrain. We know that change is coming at an increasingly fast pace and, while we are not always sure what’s waiting for us around the bend, we must constantly be cautious and alert to what we may be approaching down that curve.

Yes, just like preparing to be a sound, safe driver, those in the home and specialty infusion therapy community have the opportunity—through education, training, strategic planning, collaboration and risk preparedness—to head off any danger and, instead, find the opportunities that lie beyond that bend in the road. Today’s emerging health care environment, replete with both shifting reimbursement paradigms and innovations in technology, clinical care and a powerful drug pipeline, will dramatically change the ways in which we travel down our business and clinical pathways. Even gaining access to the road may be different and challenging, compared to how access has been gained previously—and, while periodic “looks in the rearview mirror” are always important to gauge the proper perspective on how you are moving forward, you cannot drive your future by only looking backwards. Trying to assure a flourishing future via primarily holding onto the productive approaches that worked previously is a navigational strategy for failure. Correctly studying the roadmap of where health care is going, combined with a prudent openness to new methods and strategic collaborations for best negotiating the unknown curves ahead, are the wisest ways to position your company—and our industry—for success.

Whether energized by the thrill of finally having a palpable shot at achieving a comprehensive home infusion benefit for older and disabled Medicare beneficiaries or by taking judicious steps to not just survive—but thrive—within the growing number of tighter health care reimbursement paradigms that are looming around many sharp turns, we must collectively be safe and responsible drivers of our field’s future. The health care road before us is crowded and abounding with many treacherous twists, curves and risks—but together, through innovation, forward thinking and authentic collaborations, we will safely and successfully navigate whatever’s around the bend.



Steve