

**RECEIVED**

**PIERRE DURAND, DPA**  
Health Care Agency Director  
Ventura County Medical Center Administrator

**VENTURA COUNTY GRAND JURY**  
Kirk E. Watson  
HCA Deputy Director  
Ambulatory Care Administrator  
Compliance Officer

August 4, 2004

**RECEIVED**  
AUG 18 2004  
VENTURA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

Honorable Bruce A. Clark  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
Ventura County Hall of Justice  
800 South Victoria Avenue - #2120  
Ventura, CA 93009

**AUG 11 2004**

**OFFICE OF THE  
PRESIDING JUDGE**

**Re: 2003-2004 Grand Jury Report: *Urgent Care in Ventura County***

Dear Judge Clark:

On May 6, 2004, the Ventura County Health Care Agency ("HCA") was provided with a copy of the above referenced report by the 2003-2004 Ventura County Grand Jury ("Grand Jury"). The cover letter accompanying the report requested that HCA prepare a written response within 90 days and forward it to you with a copy to the Grand Jury. The Director of HCA, Pierre Durand, has asked that I prepare the response on behalf of the agency in my capacity as Deputy Director and Ambulatory Care Administrator.

As stated in the introductory summary to the report, the purpose of the Grand Jury inquiry was to determine the availability of urgent care, outpatient facilities provided by HCA to Ventura County residents. Before addressing the substance of the report I believe it would be helpful to give some context to the issues addressed by the Grand Jury.

HCA consists of 5 different departments which work together to serve the diverse health care needs of each and every community in Ventura County. These departments, the Ventura County Medical Center and Ambulatory Care Clinics, the Public Health Department, the Behavioral Health Department, the Ventura County Health Care Plan, and the Medical Examiner's Office, form a fully integrated delivery system encompassing the full continuum of health care services.

That system provides over 1,000,000 patient and client contacts throughout the County each year. The contacts with patients and clients who live in the east County alone amount to over 30 million dollars in services provided. More than 85% of those services go to underserved patients and clients for whom HCA is the health care safety net. These

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individuals experience barriers to receiving medical care due to any combination of economic, cultural or lifestyle conditions. They rely on HCA to break down those barriers and provide the quality health care all our County residents deserve.

As such, the constant focus of the administrators, managers and staff of all 5 departments is to increase the accessibility of the safety net system while maintaining the highest standards of quality, and to do so in a financially responsible manner. Given the complexities of modern health care delivery, the increasing number of County residents that find themselves either uninsured or underinsured, and the budget issues facing government at all levels, our mission has never been more challenging. However, due to the hard work and dedication of HCA's 1,500 plus employees, and the strong support of the County Board of Supervisors, we continue to succeed.

### **Findings**

HCA concurs with all findings in the report, with the following exceptions:

**F-09.** *Of the eight facilities visited, six are under contract with the county, whereas, VCMC and Magnolia Health Center are operated directly by the County of Ventura.*

Of the 8 facilities visited by the Grand Jury, only VCMC is operated by the County. Although the County owns the other 7 facilities, they are operated by independent physician contractors.

**F-12.** *There are no urgent care facilities in east Ventura County, causing patients to drive to west county for their urgent care needs.*

While it is true that there are no separate urgent care facilities in any of the east county clinics, every clinic in the HCA system treats walk-in patients. In fact, every clinic in the system maintains open slots in each physician's schedule every day in order to accommodate walk-in patients.

Every walk-in patient who presents at an HCA system clinic is immediately seen by a triage nurse. If the triage nurse determines that the patient needs to be treated immediately they will either be seen by a clinic physician on site, or transported to the most appropriate emergency room. If the triage nurse determines that the patient does not need to be seen on an emergency basis, they will be seen as soon as the walk-in schedule permits.

Patients are often unwilling to wait until the next walk-in appointment time and instead choose to go to HCA clinic sites that maintain separate urgent care facilities and have a greater capacity to treat walk-in patients.

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## **Conclusions**

HCA concurs with all conclusions in the report.

## **Recommendations**

**R-01.** *It is recommended that the inaccuracies and misinformation in the Ventura County Health Care Agency Directory of Services be corrected.*

HCA will implement this recommendation. However, fiscal restraints preclude us from reprinting the current version of the directory. HCA updates and reprints the directory on an annual basis. The identified inaccuracies will be corrected during the next update and printing.

**R-02.** *It is recommended that the inaccuracies on the maps of the Ventura County Health Care Agency be corrected.*

HCA will implement this recommendation. However, fiscal restraints preclude us from reprinting the current versions of the maps. HCA updates and reprints these maps on an annual basis. The identified inaccuracies will be corrected during the next update and printing.

**R-03.** *It is recommended that the Ventura County Health Care Agency prepare a Needs Assessment Study for urgent care facilities in east Ventura County.*

HCA continuously assesses facility and resource needs throughout the County. We do so on two levels.

At each clinic site we monitor the number of patient visits, the length of patient wait times, and general patient satisfaction with the availability and quality of the services provided. This is to ensure that we have the proper number and types of providers in place at each clinic, and that the site itself is the appropriate size and configuration for patient needs.

In order to monitor access issues county-wide we analyze market data from HCA and non-HCA sources alike. This is to ensure that our clinics are situated in strategically appropriate locations given current market conditions and anticipated market trends.

Generally speaking, more service facilities and resources are always needed. However, budget restraints require that we prioritize these needs within the context of the overall mission of the agency.

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Although there are no immediate plans to add urgent care facilities in the east County, we will continue to monitor the needs of our patient population and make informed resource recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

### **Commendations**

HCA thanks the Grand Jury for acknowledging the hard work and dedication of its employees, and our continuing efforts to provide the best medical care available anywhere in Ventura County.

I hope this letter has provided you with helpful information. If I can be of any further assistance please feel free to contact me at 677-5272.

Sincerely,



Kirk E. Watson  
Deputy Director, HCA  
Ambulatory Care Administrator  
Compliance Officer

C: Pierre Durand, HCA Director/VCMC Administrator  
John F. Johnston, County Executive Officer  
Richard S. Hawley, Foreperson, 2003-2004 Grand Jury