

UNIFY FOR SOMETHING GREATER. HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE AWAITS.



Sharing knowledge to enable healthcare excellence

Healthcare professionals are intuitively focused on continuous improvement, and their ability to learn from their peers is critical to the advancement of patient care. We sat down with **Federico Lega, PhD, a professor of healthcare management at the State University of Milan and board member of the European Health Management Association (EHMA), and Fawn Lopez, publisher of Modern Healthcare and a vice president at Crain Communications,** to discuss their role as partners of the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence™ program and the importance of sharing healthcare knowledge across the world.

Both of your organizations are focused on sharing knowledge across the industry. Tell us a bit more about your passions and mission.

FEDERICO LEGA: EHMA was established in the 1980s to provide a forum for decision-makers and practitioners to gather and discuss health management. It underpins the opportunity for practitioners to meet and speak the same language—in an academic space where people present and discuss the latest research findings. Each day, practitioners and decision-makers have problems to solve and often, don't have research to back their decisions. Thus, EHMA is dedicated to generating opportunities and insights that can provide that support. We disseminate and translate knowledge developed throughout the industry.

FAWN LOPEZ: We aim to empower industry leaders to achieve success by providing unbiased insights and actionable information. For 45 years, we've helped healthcare executives make important decisions, ultimately allowing them to take constructive action to improve performance and successfully lead their organizations. What has changed today is that we're doing a lot more sharing of ideas and best practices, through our newly focused, bi-monthly MH magazine. More broadly, we offer information on essential topics, from daily news information online, to conferences and events, as well as white papers distributed to our audience. The UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence program helps us to fulfill our mission of sharing best practices across all sectors of healthcare, throughout the U.S. and around the world.

The healthcare industry is changing rapidly. What policy changes or paradigm shifts are you most anticipating in the next five years, and how will these changes impact healthcare innovation?

LEGA: We're facing disruptive changes that will generate completely new ways of delivering healthcare. First, we have



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technology that is increasing the mobility and customizability of care. We have to consider what that means for the clinician's ability to manage patient health. Leaders need to think about how these changes will reshape healthcare and the mindset of doctors and other health professionals. I believe Chief Information Officers (CIOs) are increasingly being recognized not just as technology experts but as strategic partners and skilled leaders who can direct their organization's adoption of innovations. Soon, the largest health system could likely be an Amazon- or Walmart-type organization, as they have both made major strides when it comes to technology. I think we're going to have major shifts in the knowledge

and status of specialized health professionals, in order to face increasingly complex patient populations. We'll need to shift how we build care teams so that we can better treat patients with multiple comorbidities. Multi-disciplinary departments and teams will have a better chance at tearing down silos and providing better patient care, especially when it comes to oncology. We must advance our system to no longer be reactive, but rather proactive and preventive, addressing problems before they become problems. That's health management—managing risk factors and generating greater health literacy to help patients self-manage.

LOPEZ: I couldn't agree more—the CIO role is already undergoing a shift that will change its future. COVID-19 has really shined a spotlight on so many issues that will deeply change the work of healthcare professionals. From the events of 2020, the pandemic has accelerated innovation and fast-tracked the shift toward telehealth and virtual care. The pandemic has shown us that telehealth is safe, fast and in many cases easy—not just for patients but for providers across specialties and settings. In addition to telehealth, we also see more care moving to the home. One of the driving

forces behind this is COVID-19's impact on nursing homes, where we saw so many deaths. This implored not just providers but the entire industry to find ways to shift more care to the home. Patients want it because it's much more comfortable and better for their mental health—which can be tied to physical healing.

Clinical knowledge and scientific expertise are important to care innovation, but effective leadership is also a critical skill for clinicians and administrators who seek to transform care. What advice do you have for healthcare professionals who are looking to hone their leadership skills?

LEGA: For almost 20 years, we have internalized the idea that we should help doctors play a managerial role. First of all, aspiring clinician leaders need to have a robust understanding of what's going on around them. I usually refer to this as the "collective ambitions" of the people they manage. It's important for them to help envision the future for their team. The challenge with healthcare's current professional culture is that clinicians are ever focused on patient care and don't have enough time to spend on organizational goals. There are a lot of great clinical leaders advancing medicine, but it's rare you find one that has the time to say, "I'm going to develop a vision for my organization for the next five to ten years." Second, clinicians need to understand the importance of servant leadership. It is crucial to understand what it means to become a servant leader focused on the growth of their staff and communities. If we do that, we're on a good pathway to expand clinical leadership and make it more sustainable.

LOPEZ: The pandemic and the unprecedented pace of change within healthcare requires a new kind of leader, with a new kind of confidence. Clinicians in particular found their voice as leaders during the pandemic, rallying against misinformation and conspiracy theories and speaking truth, backed by science and medicine. They stood up and stood out as never before. I see a huge opportunity for clinicians to take more leadership roles within health systems—more clinicians should step up and take on leadership roles so that they can influence performance, the direction of the organization and other key areas. Leaders should invest in learning opportunities outside of the clinical setting to connect with others and build stronger networks within the industry and beyond.

EHMA and Modern Healthcare are partners of the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence award program. What do you value most about your role in this program?

LEGA: Being a UNIVANTS partner has been a great opportunity. We don't just contribute—we have learned a lot as we've helped

design and develop the program. We've gained so much from learning about these multi-disciplinary, outcome-based projects. It has exposed us to work around the world that is integral to our mission, and I'm thrilled that we can frame these innovations in a way that allows more organizations to learn from one another and replicate success. It's been a perfect match from the beginning.

LOPEZ: We're proud to be a partner in this very important program. It fits within our mission, which is to empower industry leaders to achieve success and build a better healthcare system through the sharing of information and best practices. We want to foster innovation, encourage collaboration and recognize the people and teams within healthcare institutions who are pioneering new ways to deliver the promise of value-based care, and UNIVANTS is doing that.

Why should healthcare innovators apply for the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence awards? As founding partners in this prestigious award program, what advice do you have for the healthcare teams who are preparing to submit applications this year?

LEGA: The criteria for evaluation is so robust and well-designed. So, regardless of whether they are recognized with an award, applicants really have an invaluable opportunity to reflect and see what they can do better. The application alone gives leaders an opportunity to celebrate their team. It's like the Olympics, where participating is in and of itself a great and valuable experience, regardless of the outcome. I would recommend that those who apply think about how they can relate their application to major shifts in health policy, such as value-based care or the impact of healthcare consumerism. That makes the project something that is not only interesting for their organization but for many others.

LOPEZ: That's a great point. Overall, I think it's a great opportunity for organizations to recognize their respective care teams. UNIVANTS promotes collaboration across disciplines, and encourages teams to work together. This is an opportunity to show your appreciation for your teams and recognize their ability to make a measurable impact not just on patients but also clinicians, payers and health systems. UNIVANTS winners have the opportunity to share their insights with others in the industry and play an important role in inspiring change and transforming care across the world. My advice is to be clear, succinct, specific and provide strong supporting data for your claims. If you make it easy for the judges to understand your project's goal and outcomes, they'll appreciate the significance of what you're trying to accomplish.

Applications for the 2021 awards open August 1st. Prepare now at UnivantsHCE.com.



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