Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Three partners in Foley's health care industry team—Monica Chmielewski, Jana Kolarik, and Lori Rubin—attended the Federation of American Hospitals (FAH) Conference and Business Exposition from June 6-8, 2021 in Nashville, Tennessee. The conference is widely regarded as one of the health industry's leading health policy events focused on supply-chain and procurement-centered issues and topics. Those who attended included hospital buyers and suppliers across the country, including Group Purchasing Organizations (GPOs), Integrated Delivery Networks (IDNs), and vendors including medical device companies, oxygen suppliers, and pharmaceutical companies. Described in further detail below are key takeaways from the conference:

- Data solutions are needed for early warning signals that a drug, medical device or product is beginning to experience heightened levels of demand. GPOs are looking to expand services and offerings to assist hospitals in areas beyond
traditional procurement.

- Consideration needs to be given to how a provider can ameliorate the stockpiling of needed resources in times of emergency. Transparency in the supply chain is needed so that suppliers can direct supplies where they are needed the most; however, there are challenges due to a perceived desire of providers to put their patients first. Competitive (and anti-competitive) concerns also present potential obstacles to data sharing.

- Telehealth experienced incredible growth over the last year with many attendant benefits; challenges remain as to quality tracking of telehealth visits and certain challenges in diagnosing patients. With the expansion of telehealth, panelists agreed that cybersecurity needs to continue to be a main focus.

- Many hospital leaders are keenly focused on health care equity in their communities.

- The health care labor force is experiencing high levels of burnout, anxiety, and depression.

- GPOs are typically focused on competitive pricing for fungible, competitive products, but certain GPOs are also addressing clients’ needs for purchased services beyond laundry, lawn services, etc. to include professional staffing services.

Monday discussions focused on the response of the Federal and State governments and agencies, GPOs, IDNs, vendors, and hospital supply chains during the major impact period of the COVID-19 pandemic and leveraging lessons learned in preparing for the next disruption. Panelists—including hospital executives, GPO executives and device executives—expressed hopes for improved transparency and data analytics during times of emergency or shortfalls when there is surge demand for certain products. They discussed implementing early warning systems to predict upcoming surge demand, shortening the time from surge demand to delivery, and data solutions to head off stock piling due to slow federal/state action and direct supply to where it is needed the most. Panelists also raised concerns regarding the apparent difference between how not-for-profit and for-profit hospitals were treated.

There were further discussions on telehealth and cybersecurity, with particular focus on expanded patient reach thanks to telehealth, quality tracking of telehealth visits, challenges of diagnosing over telehealth consultations, and telehealth aiding in separating infectious patients from vulnerable ones. There were also important conversations regarding health care equity and capital, with a focus on potential capital spend and allocation in the coming “post-COVID” era. The health care labor force was also at the forefront of discussion, with speakers covering a variety of topics from heroes in the pandemic, the global nursing shortage, and rates of anxiety, depression, and burnout in health care workers. One session covered the effect of COVID-19 on disease management, including the modification of management strategies to reduce the risk of infection, delayed or cancelled services causing worsened outcomes in patients with chronic conditions, and, the lingering psychological effects of COVID-19 on patients. Another session, led by executives
from three (3) different GPOs, discussed purchased services (not items) in a post-pandemic world and costs and issues associated with same.

Finally, the conference also focused on policy and the current political climate in Washington, D.C. including the potential impact on provider, supplier and manufacturer operations.

© 2021 Foley & Lardner LLP

National Law Review, Volume XI, Number 174

Source URL: https://www.natlawreview.com/article/2021-federation-american-hospitals-conference-business-exposition