

Emerging Trends and Issues

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There has been no industry impacted like health care over the last two years. As health philanthropy leaders, we exist in the confluence of health care and nonprofit worlds. Change and fluidity are the norm. We must continue to rethink things to stay relevant. We must reallocate resources. We must stop, pause, consider and regroup. Again.

The American Hospital Association reported the financial strain on hospitals resulted in a loss of about \$323 billion dollars in 2020.¹ Kaufman Hall predicted additional losses of \$54 billion in 2021.² Many hospitals are very vulnerable right now. Many have had to delay capital investments, withhold program launches and stall campaigns. Many health organizations are unable to pursue strategies at their level of vision and potential. However, philanthropy can provide real and ready solutions. Let's dig into just some of the emerging trends and issues health care organizations are facing.

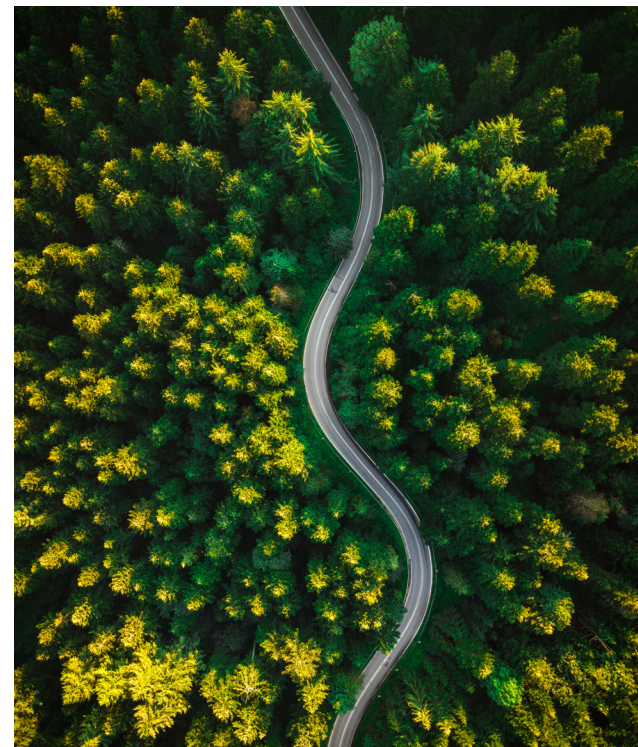
Telemedicine is a great example of how health care shifted and shifted quickly. Prior to COVID-19, telemedicine was barely more than an idea. Only 2% of medical attention was given through virtual platforms before the pandemic. Because of COVID isolation, 25% of medical attention promptly shifted to being virtual. Telemedicine and virtual visits are here to stay. Engaging those patients looks very different than traditional methods.

What about patients who are part of another trend—the shift from inpatient to outpatient services? People are now more likely to get care and leave the facility without an overnight stay. We must now consider how to capture donor intention when patients are only coming through the health care organization for short periods of time, or not at all. How does that impact loyalty, gratitude and relationships? How can they be engaged? Here’s just one idea. We now have folks with virtual visits who are sitting on the portal waiting for a physician or a clinical partner while staring at a blank screen. It’s time to grab that real estate before someone else does. It’s time to use that “waiting room” screen to share information about mission and impact via PowerPoint, video and more.

There are also the ongoing pressures of ever-changing consumer expectations. We constantly hear “consumerism, consumerism, consumerism.” We’re talking a lot about the connection between consumerism and patient experience. Patients have new expectations around the way they want to interact with their health care. They want more virtual experiences. They don’t want to wait too long. They don’t want to worry about access. They want their experience to be commensurate with the best in class. We must now enable experience through apps and other strategies to allow patients to interact with us from the palms of their hands and to meet their rising expectations.

We also know medicine itself is changing. It is becoming more and more personalized. That’s really exciting, but what I’ve found is many organizations are not comfortable raising money for personalized medicine. This is a story we need to start learning. We need to tell about where medicine is going and what the implications of personalized medicine will be.

Strategic planning in health care is also changing. Health organizations have often struggled to articulate their vision and strategy in order to inform philanthropic priorities. However, we now see another dynamic that will impact our ability to create alignment between strategy and philanthropy: shortening planning cycles. Planning cycles are starting to address a shorter time horizon for a variety of reasons—including fast-evolving clinical innovation, changing consumer expectations, shifting payment paradigms, repercussions from the pandemic and more. This means many hospitals find it impossible to anticipate strategic priorities five or 10 years out into the future. Many health organizations now focus on two or three-year plans. That immediately reduces the runway for campaigns. However, philanthropy is always the servant of strategy, so it is imperative for health organizations and their philanthropy arm to successfully achieve alignment. This not only demands campaigns be much more agile but also necessitates redesigning campaigns to share more granular details on plans as strategy continues to evolve. [Strategically Aligned Project Selection™ \(SAPS\)](#) helps pressure test and prioritize potential



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funding opportunities to maximize the impact of philanthropy in advancing the organization's most important strategic initiatives. Great organizations must move with alacrity to identify priorities within this changed planning environment in order to continue engaging donors in health care's most important work.

Many of us have experienced, or will experience, this next trend firsthand, often due to financial pressures. There continues to be a great deal of consolidation in the market—mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures and other forms of partnership. There are a few important things to consider from a philanthropy perspective. We must ask ourselves, "Is my strategy for philanthropy clear, smart and reflective of the current environment?" As systems come together, system leadership often reaches out to individual foundations asking for strategic plans, case statements, budgets, organizational charts and more. Not being able to produce these doesn't bode well. We must ensure our house is in order. When they come knocking on our doors asking what we've got and how well we are positioned, we should be able to demonstrate the organization is not only well-positioned with solid plans but also that we are practicing at the top of our licenses. This is vital as we continue to see regionalization, systemization and collaboration in health philanthropy organizations. It's simply the future if we are going to drive efficiency and effectiveness. Accelerating our work means we can't continue to remain a bunch of stand-alone silos. We must actively be prepared for and engage in collaborative efforts.

While there are more challenges, issues and opportunities, these are a few things to consider as we face an ever-changing health care environment. What have you experienced? What have you tried? What can be improved? What can you start now to address the latest trends and issues as we elevate the bold work of health care philanthropy together?

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¹ AHA Report: *Hospital Financial Losses from COVID-19 Expected to Top \$323 Billion in 2020*

² <https://www.aha.org/guidesreports/2021-09-21-financial-effects-covid-19-hospital-outlook-remainder-2021>