

LA GENERAL MEDICAL CENTER LEADS ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION TRANSFORMATION—PATIENTS SEE IMPROVED OUTCOMES AMID NATIONAL HEALTHCARE UNCERTAINTY



LOS ANGELES, CA — March 26, 2026 — LA General Medical Center today announced publication of a peer-reviewed commentary article in the *Journal of Healthcare Leadership* detailing the story of one of the most significant transformations in its more than 140-year partnership with University of Southern California. This once-in-a-generation effort redefined how one of the nation's most complex public academic medical centers delivers care, achieving measurable improvements in patient outcomes during a period of unprecedented financial and regulatory uncertainty.

For over a century, LA General and USC have operated in partnership to train the next generation of physicians while delivering lifesaving care to the region's most vulnerable populations. In 2023, that longstanding model faced a critical inflection point when fiscal pressures and evolving healthcare demands placed the future of the affiliation at risk. Rather than compromise care, LA General took decisive action.

Over a 21-month period, LA General Medical Center and USC executed a comprehensive workforce and operational transformation—in which the Medical Center hired 273 physicians, dentists, and allied health professionals across all 19 clinical departments and launching a national recruitment strategy to ensure uninterrupted, high-quality care. USC participated in interviewing these candidates and granted them faculty appointments. In partnership, the two entities were able to restructure their long-standing relationship, converting the Medical Center to a blended academic-clinical employment model that strengthened institutional alignment and accountability, alongside a renewed focus on mission-driven hiring—prioritizing clinicians committed to serving Los Angeles County's most vulnerable communities.

Equally critical to this transformation was the leadership and commitment of LA General's nursing workforce. During this period, nursing leadership advanced key initiatives to support workforce stability, engagement, and quality of care, as well as the expansion of residency programs designed to meet the needs of a new generation of nurses. Emphasis on shared governance strengthened frontline-informed decision-making, while intentional communication strategies—ensured transparency, feedback, and accountability.

This effort was not simply a staffing initiative—it was a fundamental cultural transformation designed to strengthen LA General Medical Center's ability to deliver on its mission of world-class care and education for all—and ultimately exceed it. Despite the complexity and scale of the transition, LA General achieved significant improvements in patient care outcomes, including a decline in hospital-wide mortality rates, the lowest observed-to-expected mortality index on record, and an improvement in Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grades from a "C/D" baseline to an "A"—the first in the hospital's history. These outcomes demonstrate that large-scale organizational change, when executed with discipline and purpose, can enhance rather than disrupt patient care.

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“This transformation was grounded in a simple but uncompromising principle: patient care comes first,” said Brad Spellberg, Chief Medical Officer of LA General Medical Center. “We undertook one of the most complex workforce transformations in the history of public safety-net hospitals—and our patients did better because of it. Despite the scale and speed of this transition, we not only maintained quality—we improved it. We saw measurable reductions in mortality and achieved the highest safety ratings in our history. That outcome reflects what is possible when staffing, culture, and accountability are fully aligned around a shared mission.”

This effort demonstrates that, driven by significant financial and operational pressures felt nationwide, a public safety-net hospital can raise the standard of care while remaining fully committed to its community—and exceed its mission in the process.

As public hospitals and academic medical centers nationwide face increasing pressure from Medicaid uncertainty, workforce shortages, and federal funding constraints, LA General Medical Center’s transformation offers a replicable model—one that aligns workforce structure with mission rather than legacy systems, invests in culture as a driver of quality and safety, prioritizes patient care over volume-based incentives, and builds strategic academic partnerships grounded in shared value.

“This was not simply an operational adjustment—it was a defining moment for our institution,” said Jorge Orozco, Chief Executive Officer of LA General Medical Center. “We care for some of the most complex and vulnerable patients in the nation, and our responsibility to them does not change in times of uncertainty—it becomes even greater. We made a deliberate decision to protect and strengthen patient care at every level. What we achieved is a direct reflection of our entire workforce—our physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, and every member of our staff—who show up every day with a deep commitment to serving this community. This transformation demonstrates that even in one of the most complex public safety-net hospitals in the country, it is possible to deliver better outcomes—not just preserve our mission, but exceed it for the people who depend on us most.”

This milestone represents more than a moment in time—it signals a new chapter for LA General Medical Center and the patients it serves. As healthcare systems nationwide navigate increasing uncertainty, LA General remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering exceptional care, advancing clinical education, and leading with purpose. The lessons from this transformation position LA General not only to meet the challenges ahead, but to help define the future of public healthcare.