

## The OODA Loop Advantage for Hospitals

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HHP630, Spring 2020

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April 14, 2020

Hospitals are gaining a competitive advantage by incorporating the OODA loop process in planning community outreach programs for personal fitness, health education, and the social needs of consumers.

Three hospitals in Boulder County, Colorado, are expanding their mission of service and care by providing health-related benefits to the entire community. Two hospitals use what appears to be the OODA loop process, while one continues established methods of operation.

John Boyd, a military strategist, developed a method for making decisions quickly by using four steps. Boyd named his method the OODA loop, which stands for **Observe**, **Orient**, **Decide**, and **Act**. The OODA loop method has grown in popularity and has expanded to business use by providing guidance for making sound decisions quickly. The OODA loop process includes **feedback** at every step, allowing adjustments and adaptations in response to changing conditions. (Juneja n.d.)

Three hospitals operate and compete against each other in Boulder County, CO:

- Longmont United Hospital (LUH), owned by Centura Health nonprofit. (C. Health 2020)
- UC Health Longs Peak Hospital, (UCH), owned by the University of Colorado (U. Health, UC Health Longs Peak Hospital 2020)
- Foothills Hospital, owned by Boulder Community Health (BCH). (B. C. Health, Foothills Hospital 2020)

UC Health Longs Peak Hospital and Foothills Hospital are both newer hospitals. Upon opening, they first **observed** what was happening in the county regarding health related issues. Longmont United Hospital, which opened in 1959, chose to compete by continuing their

traditional path of offering only in-house services to the community, and maintaining a business-as-usual operational format. (Spina 2019)

Personal fitness related events and activities thrive in Boulder County. Residents actively participate in many area outdoor sports, such as hiking, cycling, mountain climbing, skiing, hang gliding, and running. Boulder, Colorado is known for being a mecca for athletes who come from all over the world to train, and to compete in the 10K Boulder, Boulder citizen's race. The race draws over 50,000 participants of all ages and running/walking abilities. The city of Boulder has an elevation of 5391 feet above sea level, making the thin air more challenging for athletes.

(Boulder 2020)

Boulder Community Health, owners of the Foothills hospital, observed the impact on the community of the 50,000 participants in the Boulder Boulder race. They observed that no other medical organization in the county participated in the event, and oriented their organization to find ways to participate. Boulder Community Health made a decision to take action. Boulder Community Health decided to join the national *Walk with a Doc* program and incorporate this program into a heart-healthy community participation event in the Boulder Boulder. (Doc 2020) : (B. C. Health, Walk With a Doc 2020)

A prominent cardiologist with Boulder Community Health, Dr. Nelson Trujillo, runs the *Walk with a Doc* program in Boulder County. A recent announcement sent out states that anyone participating in the *Walk with a Doc* program could walk with Dr. Trujillo in a wave in the Boulder Boulder 10k race. Information regarding this program states:

*“Free Community Events Celebrating the Health Benefits of Walking. Join Boulder Community Health, and [the City of Boulder](#) for monthly 'Walk with a Doc' events and take steps*

*toward better health! Events are held at various locations throughout the county. These fun, free walking events show how easy it is to get 30 minutes of exercise a day and prevent disease. They're also a great way to get out, get active, enjoy good conversation, and learn top healthy-lifestyle tips from our physicians. You can walk at your own pace and choose your distance. It's all part of BCH's vision to partner to create and care for the healthiest community in the nation. Did you know? Walking can: Reduce blood pressure, Lower low-density lipoprotein (LDL or "bad" cholesterol) Manage your weight, Improve your mood, Strengthen your heart, lungs and bones. **At Walk with a Doc events, you will:** Learn about a current health topic, Walk and talk with a local doc, Free blood pressure checks, Free giveaways, Free refreshments, Attend 3 walks and get a pedometer, Attend 4 walks and receive a shirt. (B. C. Health, Walk With a Doc 2020)*

I personally attended several of the *Walk with Doc* events. Average attendance was about one hundred people. The walks were everything advertised, and fun events to attend.

Boulder Community Health also **observed** that there was a need for free health-related education in Boulder County. Free health-related education was difficult to find in Boulder County and usually consisted of brochures found only in medical offices. Boulder Community Health **oriented** that no other health organization was providing free public health education. Boulder Community Health **decided** to take **action** to become the community leader in free health-related lectures and special events. (B. C. Health, Boulder Community Health 2020)

Boulder Community Health now provides several free lectures per month, at various locations around the County and online. Lectures consist of specialists in various fields of medicine speaking to an audience while providing a PowerPoint presentation. A question and answer session is held near the end of each event. Public notifications of events are delivered through email and on the Foothills Hospital/Boulder Community Health website stating:

*BCH offers our community free health lectures featuring experienced physicians with the latest in treatment advice, prevention and signs that you should seek a consultation. Events are held throughout Boulder and Broomfield counties and beyond. (B. C. Health, Boulder Community Health 2020)*

Social concerns in Boulder County include, among other things, concern for the physical and social well-being of the rapidly growing age 50+ population residing within the county. UC Health Longs Peak Hospital chose to use what appears to be OODA loop approach to focus on the age 50+ residents in the community. UC Health opened a hospital in the northern part of Boulder County two years ago and observed the increasing demographic number of residents in the community who are age 50+. (US Census 2018 2020)

UC Health oriented their observations to notice that seniors did not have any local organizations that focused on their health using a holistic approach. UC Health leaders decided to take the action necessary to provide such an organizations. UC Health proceeded to found the *Aspen Club* to serve seniors in Boulder County, Fort Collins, Loveland and Greeley, Colorado. (U. Health, Aspen Club 2020)

The *Aspen Club* provides monthly newsletters to its 13,768 members. (Club 2020) Membership in *Aspen Club* is free. *Aspen Club* offers their annual signature *Amazing in Aging* event, which is a health and wellness fair for seniors with community booths, music and speakers. *Aspen Club* fitness classes are available for both men and women, including classes in yoga, core strength, Tai Chi, and other fitness issues. In addition, *Aspen Walking Clubs* are active in many communities. (U. Health, Aspen Club 2020)

UC Health went even a step further in their holistic social approach. *Aspen Club* also offers members Medicare counseling and assistance, caregiver education, nutrition education and personal consultations, advance care planning, information and referral services to hospital and community resources, legal and financial education classes, free distribution of sidewalk safety bags of ice-melt, therapeutic mini-massages, AARP Driver Safety Programs, and a 10% discount in the hospital cafeteria. Most services are free and some have a low-cost fee. *Aspen Club* also sponsors an annual formal ball and summer concerts for members. (U. Health, Aspen Club 2020)

I recently attended an *Aspen Club* event held at the local UC Health hospital. The event was a demonstration of healthy eating choices. A hospital chef and his assistants prepared healthy menu items for seniors while a nutritionist explained the nutritional value of each ingredient chosen. Everyone attending enjoyed the free nutritious lunch. Over 100 people attended the event.

In contrast to the community outreach programs offered by two competing hospitals in Boulder County, 60-year-old Longmont United Hospital continues to offer only in-house services. Longmont United Hospital appears to either not be familiar with the OODA loop process or rejects any changes in operation. Longmont Hospital decided to remain with its existing in-house support groups, childbirth and pregnancy classes, parenting education, CPR certificates, and classes for seniors with specific medical conditions. No disease prevention, fitness, wellness, or social programs are offered to the community. (Hospital 2020)

The new UC Health Hospital that opened in Longmont, Colorado, just two years ago, is clearly taking patients and support away from Longmont United Hospital. Longmont United Hospital recently announced a cost saving measure of closing its physical therapy unit, gymnasium, and heated therapy pool. Following this announcement, the local newspaper

received many angry letters denouncing the closing of this community's only heated therapy pool. (Brogan 2019)

I personally know two nurses who work at Longmont United Hospital, and they tell me that they now have reduced work hours and that many of the hospital's beds are empty. They are both applying for jobs at other hospitals.

It appears to me that UC Health and Foothills Hospitals are both using a form of the OODA loop process to observe the needs of their community, orient as to how they can best fulfill those needs, decide on an action, and follow through to completion of their plan. Both hospitals and the community are better off because of those decisions. Public feedback consists of the increasing number of residents who participate in programs and activities offered by these two hospitals. *U.S. News* recently ranked UC Health Hospitals the #1 hospital in Colorado. (Report 2020)

In contrast, Longmont United Hospital appears to be a target for closure or a buy-out in the not too distant future. Longmont United Hospital remains focused on the idea that they only serve sick people and that consumers must come to them.

As a resident of Boulder County and a consumer of health services, I prefer hospitals and community related programs that offer encouragement and support on ways to remain healthy and live an active lifestyle. It appears that many other consumers of health-related services also share that preference.

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