

## Compliance Today – June 2019

# Managing physician agreements and staying out of scandalous headlines

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By Gail Peace

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If you've been to the bustling Gaslamp Quarter in downtown San Diego recently, you have probably seen the surge of what transportation experts call the "micro-mobility trend." New bike and dockless e-scooter-sharing services are flourishing on almost every street corner. It's a fun, economic way to travel around town and the kind of social movement that will continue to boom, not just in busy California cities such as San Diego, but all over the country, and even the world.

However, like every trend that seems well-intentioned (who wouldn't want to ride around on something that looks like it's from the movie *Back to the Future II*?), the people behind micro-mobility programs face their own challenges. In fact, for every headline announcing a new e-scooter program, you are likely to find a story about disgruntled business owners in the same part of town who are tired of congested sidewalks. And then there are the headlines about injuries and the inevitable uptick in emergency room visits as a result of said programs. But these types of complications can be expected when change is occurring. And, despite such challenges, companies that focus on micro-mobility are not backing down, nor are they giving up on expansion opportunities. They are figuring out new ways to get bigger and better.

It is a lesson we can all learn from in the healthcare world, particularly when it comes to managing the proverbial thorn in a hospital's proverbial side: physician contract compliance. Like the transportation industry, physician arrangements represent an area of a hospital's operations that, in many ways, has been evolving for a while now (but still needs improvement). The fact is, most hospitals and health systems have a multitude of physician contracts to manage all at once, and these arrangements can be extremely difficult to track due to their inherent complexities. In 2018 alone, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) reported recoveries of \$2.91 billion, criminal actions against 764 individuals and entities, and civil actions against 813 individuals and entities.<sup>[1]</sup> Physician arrangements were usually at the center of these investigations and damaging news stories. But, similar to the micro-mobility movement, when the going gets tough, hospitals organizations need to get tougher and more resilient—especially with their approach around physician-contract compliance. And there are specific ways to do just that.

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