Market Dynamics Lead to Increased Hospital-based Physician M&A

Commentary:

- On February 27th, 2024, Colorado's attorney general announced an agreement with Anesthesia Partners of Colorado, Inc. (USAP), a national anesthesiology practice with private-equity ownership to sever contracts with five hospitals in the state because it created a monopoly in the Denver and Durango markets, forcing patients and their insurance companies to pay higher prices to be sedated during surgeries. The settlement between the attorney general's office and U.S. Anesthesia Partners will also loosen the company's restrictions on its Colorado employees by requiring it to dissolve non-compete agreements that prevent doctors from switching to new practices. Under the settlement, doctors will be freed from those agreements and will be able to move to different practices or establish new anesthesiology groups.
- At first blush, the news of this settlement seems like all bad news for clinicians seeking a financial partner for growth or exit purposes. But dig a little deeper, and we believe this will be a net-positive for middle market and lower middle market practices.
- We expect to see more hospital systems pivoting towards awarding contracts to manage anesthesia, emergency, and radiology departments to smaller independent physician groups; resulting in less contract concentration. The new contract growth should result in a fundamental increase in the valuation of the independent groups. This growth opportunity is expected to garner increased interest from both strategic players and private equity investors.
- Additionally, this new antitrust focus could yield a scenario where smaller lower middle market targets that
 have historically been viewed as add-on candidates are now looked at as potential platform investments in an
 effort to de-risk a transaction from antitrust scrutiny. As a result, owners of these new platform targets may
 enjoy significantly more potential upside related to the "second bite of the apple" as a result of being the first
 roll-over equity in the capital structure of "newco." In fact, we have many sell-side clients who remain as the
 largest single shareholder of the newly formed operating company after experiencing a significant liquidity
 event by going through a transaction process.

Recent Notable Physician Group M&A Activity



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^{*} Represents a transaction executed by principals of Hexagon Capital Alliance at a prior firm