

People-Centric

An Interview with Frank A. Corvino,
President and Chief Executive Officer, Greenwich Hospital



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EDITORS' NOTE Frank Corvino has held his current post since 1991 and was Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer from 1988 to 1991. In addition, he is Executive Vice President of the Yale New Haven Health System. Prior to Greenwich, Corvino was an Executive Vice President at Our Lady of Mercy Medical Center in Bronx, New York, where he also held various other management positions. He received his undergraduate degree in Pharmacy at Fordham University and completed his graduate training at St. John's University. Corvino currently serves on the boards of the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA), Greenwich Emergency Medical Services (GEMS), and the Norwalk Community College Foundation.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF Greenwich Hospital (www.greenwichhospital.org) is a 174-bed community hospital, serving lower Fairfield County, Connecticut and Westchester County, New York, and is a major academic affiliate of Yale University School of Medicine and a member of the Yale New Haven Health System. Since its founding in 1903, Greenwich Hospital has evolved into a progressive regional medical center and teaching institution with an internal medicine residency, and the facility represents all medical specialties and offers a wide range of medical, surgical, diagnostic, and wellness programs. In the fall of 2005, Greenwich Hospital completed construction on its main campus with the opening of the Thomas and Olive C. Watson Pavilion. Combined with the Helmsley Medical Building, which opened in 1999, the state-of-the-art facility has become a model of advanced health care design.

How do you define the culture of Greenwich Hospital?

The culture here is totally people-centric; people are our most valued asset, and we treat them with respect and dignity. My administrative team all espouse those values and everyone is there to help the next person, everyone knows what the organizational goals and objectives are, and they work in a collaborative manner with each other.

How much of an impact has today's economic environment had on the hospital, and is it challenging to provide quality care while considering the budget?

This is the most challenging year in my professional career and probably that of most people in health care. We have been under pressure to reduce costs, to become more transparent, and to better align with our medical staffs to deal with less reimbursement, all of which has had a tremendous impact on us. But we have made quality and safety our number one priority, and although we have had to cut costs in some areas, we have redesigned how we do the work so that we're more efficient. That way fewer people can accomplish the same goal with less work and wasted time.

Greenwich Hospital is a leader within the community, but in recent years, haven't you become more of a regional player, as well?

We are much more of a regional hospital now than we've ever been. Forty percent of our patients come from New York, specifically Westchester County. Our emergency room increased from about 19,000 visits in 1999 to about 41,000 this year, and most of that is because of growth in Westchester County patients.

In addition to treating sick patients, you have also been very focused on keeping people well. How critical is that to the work you do, and can you highlight some of the efforts in that area?

The best way to control health care costs is to not incur them. Later in life, we tend to have more things go wrong and therefore require more expenditure of funds. If you can get people into a healthy lifestyle and talk about prevention and wellness, it helps control health care costs. We've got several major initiatives: The first is our Center for Healthy Living, which deals with exercise, diet, smoking cessation – all aspects of prevention and wellness. We also have a regional health outreach arm in Community Health at Greenwich Hospital that conducts screenings and educational programs. The Center for Integrative Medicine is another service that combines the best of Western medicine with the best of Eastern medicine, and deals with prevention, stress reduction, and wellness.

How critical is integration with the community, and is that something you foster throughout the hospital?

Greenwich Hospital is more than a building; it's about people. My administrative staff knows how important it is to become part of the community. We've got people in service clubs and community organizations in Greenwich and in neighboring communities. We want to be a part of the communities we serve. We want the community to feel that we are their hospital and we want them to know the faces of Greenwich Hospital.

With heavy debate today around health care reform, do you feel the dialogue is effective when you look at both public policy and the ideas being discussed, and how critical is full reform?

We're not really talking about health care reform in the current debate; we are talking about health care financing reform. We're talking about money; we're not talking about patients and people. There are so many issues that need to be tackled at the grassroots level, like malpractice reform and motivating people to become health care professionals. There is a tremendous shortage of primary care physicians in this country, so if we insure all 50 million people who are uninsured, there will not be enough doctors to take care of them. There are also the issues of how we're going to take care of the aging population and the baby boomers. The appropriate way to go about this is not to rush toward a quick fix, but to systematically look at what the issues are, build a new foundation, and motivate hospitals and doctors to work together to lower health care costs. We essentially bailed out the banking industry and the automotive industry, and when it comes to health care, we're just going to cut reimbursements before we come up with solutions on how to deal with the serious issues that are affecting every American. This will impact health care negatively. We do have the greatest health care system in the world, as broken as it is, but we can make it better if we build a foundation and not just deal with across-the-board cuts without dealing with the problems.

In an industry that is increasingly reliant on technology, is it challenging to make sure you don't lose that human part of the business?

Yes. Although health care is a business, we are dealing with people, and anyone who has ever been a patient in a hospital understands the importance of not losing that human touch. People who come to the hospital don't want to be there, so our job is to make sure we never lose that touch, because we're about helping people. That's our mission. ●