



## Patient-Centric

An Interview with **Surya N. Mohapatra, Ph.D., Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Quest Diagnostics**

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Surya Mohapatra joined Quest Diagnostics in February 1999 as Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, was appointed President in June 1999, and was elected to the Board of Directors in October 2002. In May 2004, he was appointed Chief Executive Officer and was named Chairman of the Board of Directors in December of that year. Prior to joining Quest, Mohapatra served as Senior Vice President and member of the Executive Committee of Picker International. He is a member of the Board of Directors of IIT Corporation, a Trustee of Rockefeller University, and a member of the Corporate Advisory Board of Johns Hopkins Carey Business School.*



Surya N. Mohapatra

**COMPANY BRIEF** *The world's leading provider of diagnostic testing, information, and services, Quest Diagnostics ([www.QuestDiagnostics.com](http://www.QuestDiagnostics.com)) offers the broadest access to diagnostic testing services through its network of laboratories and patient service centers; provides interpretive consultation through its extensive medical and scientific staff; and is a pioneer in developing innovative diagnostic tests and advanced health care information technology solutions that help improve patient care.*

**When you look at the strength of Quest Diagnostics' business, what is it about the brand that helps create such results and how do you differentiate Quest?**

We have a very simple way of summarizing our strategy: patients, growth, and people.

Our number-one priority is the patients. So our passion for patients, backed by our obsession with growth and our commitment to people, are what drives the energy of the company.

Over the past 10 years, we have taken this company – which was considered a laboratory company but is now a diagnostics company – from \$1.5 billion in revenue with a 4 percent market share to \$7.5 billion in revenue with a 15 percent market share.

Thousands of dedicated people have made this possible. What I am most proud of is that we changed the culture from operations-centric to patient-centric. Patient-centric means you do what is right for the patient first.

The four areas that we focus on are cancer, cardiovascular disease, infectious disease, and neurological disorders.

Heart disease and cancer are our nation's top two killers. With early detection and treatment, many lives can be saved. Infectious diseases can also be prevented and controlled through early detection. In addition, neurological disorders are gaining attention and we believe this is an area that will be extremely important in the future.

**When you came onboard, did the employees understand your vision early on and support it?**

It was difficult, because the culture was operations-centric, not patient-centric.

But over the past five or six years, our people have become more invested in this vision and if you ask them to tell you what is most important today, you will invariably hear them talk about our patients.

For example, if you are patient-centric you are focused on reducing anxiety time. In this industry, we have a measure called Turnaround Time – TAT. I dropped the T to make it AT, which is short for Anxiety Time. If you go to the doctor but you don't have the results yet, you are anxious. So we look to reduce that anxiety time.

The reason we come to work is to help patients and when you realize that we test for half a million patients a night, that means half a million families are waiting to know if someone in the family is well.

It may seem like a little thing, but that "little thing" supplies the energy that drives the entire company.

**How critical has technology been and how much has new technology changed the way you operate?**

Technology is extremely important. There are two types: one is in the technology in our laboratories and the other is the technology we utilize to provide information to doctors, hospitals, and patients.

We have invested a lot of money to become the largest independent network based on the Web – we are connected to 165,000 primary care doctors and 2,000 hospitals.

This is important, because not only will your doctor have your information but he or she can also share that information with another physician or a hospital. It has also helped us get close to the doctors and patients in the poorer, underserved areas.

Our approach is facilitating the Nationwide Health Information Network, and we are working with the government to increase the

adoption of electronic health records and to improve patient access to health care data.

I've been in health care for 30 years in three different countries and I feel health care costs are not going to come down and quality is not going to improve unless we empower patients, and take some personal accountability. But you cannot empower patients if they are kept in the dark. Unfortunately, the way medicine is practiced in the U.S., patients sometimes don't get the appropriate information at the right time.

So we created a mobile health platform called Gazelle. Whether it is an iPhone or BlackBerry, if your blood samples come to Quest Diagnostics, in 33 states and in the District of Columbia, we can provide you with results. Your results go to the doctor and you get an e-mail from us that your results have been delivered to your doctor. If your doctor doesn't call you, you can still get the results of your blood test from us in 48 hours. Gazelle is secure and also stores emergency data.

**How critical is corporate responsibility and engagement in the community to the culture of Quest?**

It's very important. We have 43,000 people – 28,000 working in the lab and in the field – and they are driving the company.

Most of our people are involved in some kind of charity or community work and we created a platform, QuestCares, so we can make it official.

Apart from donating money, we also provide millions of dollars in free testing to people who cannot afford to get tested.

Our people find it important and fulfilling to work for a company that is committed to the community and to patients, because one day, any one of us could be the patient.

**Are you happy with the way the public/private relationship has progressed and the role the private sector has been encouraged to play in the state?**

I thought it was a true sign of leadership when the CEO of the state called just to thank us for staying in New Jersey and I am encouraged that he continues to ask how we can work together.

I told him that he has inherited a state that is full of technology and health care companies, so why not work to make New Jersey the healthiest state in the United States? He agreed that this is very important and vowed to stay in touch.

Utilizing public/private partnerships to discover the right priorities is very important and I wish we could do more of that across the country. ●