

A Single Standard of Care

An Interview with Deepa Kumaraiah, MD, Senior Vice President, System Chief Medical Officer, NewYork-Presbyterian (NYP)

EDITORS' NOTE *Dr. Deepa Kumaraiah oversees both enterprise-wide medical affairs and the integrated Quality and Performance Improvement program. She also oversees the Clinical Service Lines, where she provides leadership, management, and strategic vision for the integration of those efforts across all NewYork-Presbyterian hospitals and the NYP Medical Groups. Dr. Kumaraiah joined NYP in 2012 and previously served as the Senior Vice President, Service Line Integration and Chief Physician, NewYork-Presbyterian Medical Groups; and before that, as Vice President and Associate Chief Medical Officer of Service Lines and Clinical Strategy. She is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine at Columbia University Irving Medical Center, where she continues to practice in the cardiac intensive care unit. She completed her cardiovascular fellowship training at NYP/CUIMC and her internship and residency at Massachusetts General Hospital. She earned her medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania, her MBA from the Wharton School, and her ScB from Brown University. She has been named NewYork-Presbyterian Physician of the Year and is a Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine.*



Dr. Deepa Kumaraiah

How do you describe NewYork-Presbyterian's culture and values?

At NewYork-Presbyterian (NYP), we are committed to providing a single standard of care to every patient who walks through our doors. We have a profound moral obligation to provide the highest quality of accessible care to people around the region, and our cultures and values are shaped by our commitment to the diverse communities that we serve across the five boroughs of New York City, Westchester, and the Hudson Valley.

We are deeply connected to our local communities and to understanding and serving their needs from the everyday to the extraordinary. We approach every patient interaction with empathy and compassion.

We also have a culture of innovation at NYP. Our purpose is deeply engrained in nurturing and growing our team of world-class medical experts, investing in transformative research and cutting-edge clinical innovation, and prioritizing health justice for all.

What have been the keys to NewYork-Presbyterian's industry leadership and how do you define the NewYork-Presbyterian difference?

We are fortunate to be the only academic medical center in the nation affiliated with two world-class medical schools, Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, and Weill Cornell Medicine. Collectively, we have cared for those in need for hundreds of years while advancing medicine to continue helping patients live amazing lives and reducing the burden of disease for populations.

Our unique partnership means that we can offer our patients access to the broadest array of clinical experts, the most advanced, innovative treatments, and latest clinical trials. And we do this while consistently providing care to our patients with everyday health concerns in their own communities – using both in-person and virtual options.

Our teams use data, technology, and innovation to deliver a more modern, seamless, and empathetic patient experience that is tailored to each individual. We are steadfastly dedicated

INSTITUTION BRIEF *Located in New York City, NewYork-Presbyterian (NYP.org) is affiliated with two of the nation's leading medical colleges, Weill Cornell Medicine and Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons. NewYork-Presbyterian provides state-of-the-art inpatient, ambulatory, and preventive care in all areas of medicine, and is committed to excellence in patient care, education, research, and community service at ten hospital campuses: NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center, NewYork-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Allen Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Westchester Behavioral Health Center, NewYork-Presbyterian Lower Manhattan Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Westchester in Bronxville, NewYork-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital, and NewYork-Presbyterian Queens.*



NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center



NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center

to addressing the root cause of health inequities and have made leading in health justice an organizational pillar.

Finally, academic medical centers have a crucial role in training the future clinicians that will lead and transform the healthcare system. At NewYork-Presbyterian, we have one of the largest training programs in the nation – training nearly one in 70 physicians nationwide. The depth, breadth and talent within our training programs is unparalleled.

Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?

I have had the privilege of serving as the Chief Medical Officer at NewYork-Presbyterian since 2022. My three major areas of responsibility are overseeing our clinical service line strategy and integration of those efforts across NewYork-Presbyterian hospitals, leading the 800+ physicians within the NewYork-Presbyterian Medical Groups, and directing NYP's enterprise Quality and Performance Improvement program and medical affairs.

As the CMO of an integrated academic health system, one thing that is very important to me is that I still have the opportunity to be a practicing critical care cardiologist. Beyond getting to care for patients and teach trainees, the lessons learned from my clinical practice inform my leadership work. When I set out to pursue a career in medicine, I wanted to ensure that the clinicians providing frontline care had a voice at the table, so to speak, and to be involved in decision-making. As a clinician-led organization, NYP works to improve healthcare delivery for both patients and clinicians.

Will you discuss NewYork-Presbyterian's integrated Quality and Performance Improvement program?

At NewYork-Presbyterian, our mission is to be a highly reliable organization that supports unparalleled quality and safety, optimal patient outcomes and innovation. As a system, we moved to a single electronic health record

(EHR) across the enterprise a few years ago. This has allowed us to use the EHR to hardwire processes seamlessly across all 10 hospitals and has provided the platform for being a truly data-driven Learning Health System.

We consistently develop and designate priorities for quality improvement based on our own data and that of peer institutions locally and nationally. Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, with so many new team members entering the healthcare system, we had to double down on our quality programs to ensure we rapidly inculcated new team members into our culture of safety.

Our Department of Quality and Patient Safety, for example, supports our systematic organization-wide approach to planning, designing, measuring, assessing, and improving organizational performance. This includes initiatives such as attaining optimal patient outcomes and patient and family experiences, supporting an engaged and safe workforce, enhancing appropriate utilization of resources, and more.

How important is it for NewYork-Presbyterian to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?

Serving communities and people of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, races, ethnicities, cultures, sexual orientations, religions, and genders, is critical to our mission as a leading healthcare system. We provide personalized care to patients at a wide range of physical locations across the Greater New York area including 10 hospitals, more than 200 primary and specialty care clinics and medical practices, and through our comprehensive suite of telehealth services.

At NYP, we believe it is imperative to employ and maintain a diverse workforce – one that reflects the communities in which we co-exist and that lends a positive impact on the experience of our patients. I truly believe that diverse teams make us a stronger organization. We strive to build diverse teams and also foster an environment of belonging for our teams.

Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women in leadership roles in the industry?

According to the World Health Organization, women account for 70 percent of the global healthcare sector. Yet, at the executive level, women make up just 25 percent of healthcare leadership positions. The numbers are surprising. Yet despite this low percentage, I believe that there are growing opportunities for women to assume leadership roles in the hospital and healthcare industry writ large, and I am proud to belong to an organization where 50 percent of our leadership team (C-suite/SVP level) is made up of women, with ambitions goals to keep shifting this number.

Speaking from personal experience, sponsorship and mentorship matter. It is certainly something that I look to pay back to rising female leaders. My advice is to be organized and vocal about what you want and need, surround yourself with people who will advocate for you – whether direct managers or mentors – and stick to your goals. The Women Physicians Initiative at NewYork-Presbyterian, for example, is such a support system that seeks to make our hospital the best place in the country for female physicians to work, train, and flourish.

What do you see as NewYork-Presbyterian's responsibility to be engaged in the communities it serves and to be a force for good in society?

It is without question that as a leading academic hospital and healthcare system with expansive reach, we have a profound obligation and responsibility to take care of the communities we serve and deliver high-quality patient experiences and outcomes. But care must be made accessible, which is why we invest in partnerships with community-based organizations who provide critical services to our patients to help accomplish this. It is also very important that our workforce reflect the local community which is why we are invested in hiring from the communities in which we operate and provide education opportunities to local youth who are interested in a future career in healthcare through programs such as our Lang Youth Medical Program.

Did you know at an early age that you had a passion to pursue a career in medicine?

I knew early on that I wanted to help people. Much of this was driven by watching my father, who was a physician and perhaps more importantly, a key pillar in our community. His commitment to his patients and their families regardless of the time of day or size of the challenge was inspiring. He deeply understood that health was made up of many factors beyond diagnoses (i.e., social determinants of health) and worked tirelessly to see and care for the “whole patient.” If I could make even a fragment of the impact that he had over the course of my career, then I will have been successful. My path in healthcare has been motivated by making the system easier to work in for dedicated clinicians like my father and also easier to access for all communities. ●