

# Belonging and Excellence in Nursing

An Interview with Paul Coyne, DNP, MBA, MS, APRN, AGPCNP-BC, Senior Vice President and Chief Nurse Executive, HSS

**EDITORS' NOTE** After graduating from Providence College, Paul Coyne worked for four years as a financial analyst at Goldman Sachs, where he specialized in derivatives and system enhancement to improve trading capability. After a few years, he decided to transition into healthcare. He went back to school and simultaneously entered Columbia University's four-year BSN/MSN/DNP program for nursing as well as Northeastern University's



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combined MBA/MS finance program. Over the course of the next four years, Coyne completed five degrees, becoming an adult-gerontology nurse practitioner with a subspecialty in palliative care. In 2015, while completing his doctorate, Coyne was hired to work at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital to manage a team of data scientists to help fulfill clinical needs with analytic solutions. Coyne joined HSS in 2017. He is an author, inventor, entrepreneur, and public speaker. Due to his unique knowledge of the interplay of clinical practice, finance, and technology, he continues to be recognized nationally, receiving over 20 awards for contributions to healthcare including recognition by Crain's New York as among their "40 under 40" and by Modern Healthcare as a "Top 25 Innovator." Coyne is an inaugural fellow of SONSIEL, the Society of Nurse Scientists, Innovators, Entrepreneurs, and Leaders and a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives, The American Association of Nurse Practitioners, and the American Nurses Association. He serves on the board of visitors of Columbia University School of Nursing. Coyne earned a Doctor of Nursing Practice, an MS, Nursing, and a BS, Nursing from Columbia University, New York; an MBA, Healthcare Management, and an MS, Finance from Northeastern University, Massachusetts; and a BA, American Studies from Providence College, Rhode Island.

## What is the role of Chief Nurse Executive at HSS?

Like all nurses, the role of the Chief Nurse Executive (CNE) is to be the voice of the patient. The CNE must promote the creation of and the adherence to the highest

level of standards, with the goal of ensuring that patients are safe when they are receiving care at HSS. This includes administrative and operational oversight of clinical and other daily activities within the organization in accordance with internal policy and government regulations.

Equally important to the role is to be a champion of our culture – to encourage others to embrace and live this philosophy of doing the right thing for the patient, doing the

right thing for each other, and doing the right thing for yourself – and realizing that they can all be the same.

## What was your path to leadership?

I suffered a stroke at the age of 22 and had to learn how to walk and talk and regain many of my memories again. The stroke was caused by a heart disease that I have lived with since birth. Due to these two strong influences on my life, there has always been a persistent deep desire for me to strive as much as possible to do as many of the things everyone else can do that I can't, while having the world accept and learn from that which I can do that others may not be able to do.

Along the way, I realized I didn't just want this for myself, but for others as well. I started trying to help every environment I was in be more like this reality for everyone. And, in doing so, I began leading. I realized that to have others want to follow you, in addition to hopefully pure intentions, you must know what you are leading. I went back to school to learn multiple aspects of healthcare to have the privilege of leading in a field that truly matters.

## What are the most important aspects of nursing at HSS?

Outside of that which is beyond their scope of practice and reserved for a prescriber, such as ordering medications, medically diagnosing a disease or performing surgery, the vast majority of what a nurse does, the nurse does autonomously. The nurse's role, therefore, is not solely to assist, but to be an independent contributing member of the team to care in ways that only the nurse is trained and able to do. For nursing is both a science and an art.

In the ambulatory setting, it means facilitating a thorough patient history by creating a trusting environment where the patient is comfortable to answer all the questions accurately, ensuring pertinent information is known prior to surgery. In the OR, it means ensuring all instrumentation is sterile and available while holding the patient's hand prior to anesthesia. In the post-operative setting, it means monitoring the patient to ensure optimal recovery while telling the patient they did great during surgery after they wake up. In the inpatient setting, it means administering medications and teaching the patient how to care for themselves at home following surgery at time of discharge.

Beyond tactical aspects of the role such as these, nursing touches every aspect of HSS because the role of the nurse is to advocate for the needs of the patient, and that is why HSS is here.

## What advice do you offer to aspiring leaders in the field of nursing?

To lead, one should seek to attain knowledge, wisdom, and vision. If someone does not possess any of these three, they will likely not be followed. If someone has only one of the three, they may be followed, but perhaps they should not be.

My advice to anyone who is aspiring to be a leader in the field of nursing would be to seek knowledge in healthcare domains beyond what a nurse is traditionally exposed to, such as technology, finance and business, to be better able to advocate for the needs of the patient with others. Then, I would seek to develop wisdom by combining this knowledge with your own lived experiences to develop a leadership style and philosophy that works for you and brings forth positive yield for others around you.

Finally, I would suggest using this knowledge and wisdom to develop a vision for yourself and for the people you are leading. The important part is that it must be the same vision. No one wants to be led by someone who is not authentic or, even worse, who expects something different of their team than they expect of themselves. But if one truly seeks knowledge, wisdom and vision, and wants it equally for others as much as they want it for themselves, I would say that whoever I was speaking to will be a great leader and I am looking forward to learning from them. ●