

Service, High Quality, and High Safety

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



Frank Corvino

EDITORS' NOTE Frank Corvino has served in his current post since 1991 and was Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer from 1988 to 1991. Prior to coming 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. He is active in community and professional organizations and served on the boards of the United Way of Greenwich and the Connecticut Hospital Association and, currently, the Greenwich Emergency Medical Services, Providence Rest Nursing Home in the Bronx, and the Norwalk Community College Foundation. Corvino was honored by the Greenwich Rotary Club in 2001 as its "Citizen of the Year" for his commitment to enhancing the quality of medical care in the region. In 2006, he was recognized with an Ellis Island Medal of Honor by the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF Greenwich Hospital (www.greenbosp.org) is a 174-bed community hospital, serving lower Fairfield County, Connecticut, and Westchester County, New York. It is a major academic affiliate of Yale University School of Medicine and a member of the Yale New Haven Health System. Since opening in 1903, Greenwich Hospital has evolved into a progressive medical center and teaching institution

with an internal medicine residency. 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 have you gone about promoting excellence throughout Greenwich Hospital?

Over the past 10 years, we've focused on creating and maintaining a culture oriented around service, high quality, and high safety. We've been relatively successful because we're able to offer high-quality care, great doctors, and a staff that really cares about the patient. Our professionals don't view their positions here as jobs; they view their positions here as opportunities for helping people. Those are the kinds of people we want working in our institution. We hire people who are not only technically competent, but who are also great people. We work with our employees to help ensure that they feel good about where they work so they go the extra mile for our patients. As a management team, we have about 30 people who meet each week to discuss fixing things that are broken, and to celebrate successes. We get many positive letters, and employee recognition is extremely important in what we do. We've also instituted financial incentives for our staff. If we meet service and patient-care quality and safety targets, the staff participates in that success financially.

Two hospitals in neighboring Westchester County, New York, have closed. How has this impacted Greenwich Hospital?

We've become much more of a regional facility. Fifteen percent of our patients used to come from Westchester County, but now it's almost 40 percent. We used to do about 19,000 emergency room visits per year, and now we do 40,000. When we rebuilt our campus in the late '90s and early 2000, we built in the flexibility to adapt to the changing patient demands, so we were able to adapt to a huge shift in volume in 2005, and we'll continue to adapt as we move forward.

Would you discuss the alternative medicine you offer at Greenwich Hospital?

We're not just taking care of people when they're sick; we also work on keeping people well and preventing illness. There are two traditions

for treating patients: Western and Eastern. In the future, you will see more integration of the two traditions that allow us to not only treat the patient's body, but also focus on the patient's mind/body/spirit experience. We opened a center in Greenwich about a year and a half ago at which we treat the whole person by providing a combination of the Western medicine that we've been used to along with some alternative techniques.

Why do you feel that it is important to have a vigorous community health outreach program?

Improving the health status of the communities we serve has always been a major priority at Greenwich Hospital – bringing preventive programs to people in their own neighborhoods. While other hospitals have cut back on outreach efforts, our hospital has become a model for health promotion in the region by making it convenient for people to access health care resources right in their own backyards. The benefits of preventive programs are plentiful. Early detection saves lives and money by identifying disease when it's easier and less expensive to treat. Wellness programs offer people the necessary tools to make lasting lifestyle changes.

For years, Community Health at Greenwich Hospital – the hospital's outreach department – has provided health screenings, education programs, and support groups at various community locations. You'll find our nurses, physicians, and other professionals at senior centers, public libraries, places of worship, schools, corporations, social service agencies, YMCAs, and other community sites throughout Connecticut and New York. Most of these services are either free or available at a very low cost.

In recent years, we have made a concerted effort to expand our programs to neighboring communities in Westchester County, which now account for more than 40 percent of our patients. At the same time, we have increased our activities in Connecticut towns. It's a very exciting time for us.

Do you feel that the new U.S. administration can create real change in health care?

At this point, I'm trying to be optimistic. Health care is a mammoth piece of our economy, and there has to be a lot of thought, study, and buy-in from all the stakeholders in order to effect change. There are really good things in the stimulus package, but the American public is used to the very best health care in the world, and I don't think there are any quick fixes. ●