

A Tool for Social Justice

An Interview with Dorcas Lind, MPH,
Assistant Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, Montefiore Medical Center

EDITORS' NOTE After a year-long consulting engagement, Dorcas Lind joined Montefiore full-time in June 2018 to build the first formal Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) program for the medical center. Prior to joining Montefiore, she served as President and Founder of Diversity Health Communications where she helped secure top-tier placement on the DiversityInc Top 50 Companies list over the past several years for a variety of clients. Before establishing Diversity Health Communications,



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she held leadership roles at several healthcare public relations firms including WCG, Ogilvy, and Edelman. In addition to client work, Lind served as communications strategist for the Ogilvy Diversity Council and worked to ensure an inclusive and diverse “workplace of the future.” This work included planning and execution of the D&I strategic plan, D&I communications, agency-wide employee resource groups and events, mentoring programs such as the Women’s Leadership Series, the Multicultural Summer Internship program, and diversity recruiting initiatives. She has held key roles with Johnson & Johnson, the Institute for Reproductive Health Policy Studies at the University of California at San Francisco, the San Francisco Foundation, Planned Parenthood, and the Mayor’s Office of Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Services in New York City. Lind obtained an MPH from the University of California at Berkeley, a B.A. with honors in Health & Society from Brown University and completed postgraduate professional training at the University of Chicago and Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government.

INSTITUTION BRIEF As the academic health system and University Hospital for Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Montefiore Health System (montefiore.org) is nationally recognized for clinical excellence, breaking new ground in research, training the next generation of healthcare leaders, and delivering science-driven, patient-centered care. Montefiore is ranked among the top hospitals nationally and regionally by U.S. News & World Report. For more than 100 years, Montefiore has been innovating new treatments, procedures and approaches to patient care, producing stellar outcomes, and raising the bar for health systems in the region and around the world.

Is it important today that the diversity and inclusion role is not just about people, but also a part of business strategy?

Absolutely. As we look at how many opportunities for leaders in diversity and inclusion are popping up across the industry, it is clear that the role is now a strategic one. Thirty years ago, diversity and inclusion was really just a notion of doing the right thing. Today, it is central to a strategic approach and, if businesses are looking to really impact their clients, their

patients, and their relationships with business partners, it is not optional. In fact, businesses who don’t apply a diversity and inclusion strategy to their work will find themselves falling behind in terms of competitiveness and quality of services.

How broadly do you define diversity at Montefiore and how does inclusion relate to diversity?

The old school of thought is that diversity was only about gender, race and ethnicity in the professional workplace. We really see diversity and inclusion in a much more comprehensive light here at Montefiore. We are not trying to simply tolerate differences, but to really leverage the richness of human experience in a way that is powerful and that helps us be innovative in solving patients’ problems. We foster diversity of thought because we know that there are multiple ways of attacking and solving a problem. When we have individuals who can really bring completely different perspectives to the issue, we come up with different solutions than we might not have come up with in the past. This creates opportunities to use the power of that diversity of thought to solve some of our most critical patient-centric challenges.

Inclusion is the celebratory piece and is deeply rooted in respect. At Montefiore, we are not simply interested in representation. It is important and we are proud of our legacy of representation in terms of reflecting the communities we serve and bringing those individuals and populations into our organization from an employee and community development perspective. However, we also want to make sure that once diverse groups enter our facilities and clinics, they have access to all levels of the organization, feel that their voices are heard and that their values and experiences are reflected in

how we develop policy and how we view our culture as an organization. Inclusion is about having a true sense of belonging and ensuring that everyone’s perspective is considered.

How critical is it to reach out to diverse populations and different talent pools to fulfill Montefiore’s diversity needs?

It is critical. I feel privileged to be a part of this organization because, from the beginning, Montefiore has defined medicine as a tool for social justice. Through our approach to talent development and talent acquisition, we are looking for diverse individuals who share that mindset and have that quest for social justice as part of their DNA. We know that when we achieve inclusion and belonging in the workplace, the chances of delivering the most culturally competent care increases. We look for a very specific set of values and skillsets that allow us to continue to build a more inclusive culture.

What is Montefiore doing to encourage diverse talent to pursue careers in healthcare?

We are the teaching hospital for the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Together, we are committed to identifying individuals in the communities we serve who might be interested in the healthcare field and finding ways to help them with medical and nursing education as well as education and training in all the auxiliary support and administrative roles that are so important to the success of a healthcare delivery system. We have programs that look at youth workforce development such as a tremendous partnership with the New York City Public Schools that allow us to expose students to healthcare careers and to participate in internships with healthcare providers who might employ them in the future.

What excited you about the opportunity to join Montefiore?

Montefiore has come full circle for me in terms of my personal journey. It was my childhood hospital and it was also the hospital where my grandparents received their end-of-life care. It is also an organization that is positioned to incorporate diversity and inclusion strategically, from population health initiatives to conducting clinical trials. Our approach engages vulnerable populations in dignified and respectful ways, increasing access to participation in medical research for the most underserved patients. That is very attractive to me. ●