

# Advancing Healthcare

An Interview with Margaret Pastuszko, President and Chief Operating Officer, Mount Sinai Health System

**EDITORS' NOTE** Prior to her current role, Margaret Pastuszko served as Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Strategy Officer where she led Mount Sinai's commitment to performance and process improvement and the identification of opportunities for investment and resource optimization. She began her career at Mount Sinai in 2001 as Associate Dean of Operations for the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and then transitioned to the role of Vice President for Business Planning at The Mount Sinai Medical Center. Before joining Mount Sinai, she served as a Divisional Administrator and Practice Manager of Internal Medicine at Temple University Hospital. She also worked as a consultant with APM Management Consultants and, later, with CSC Healthcare. Pastuszko earned a bachelor's degree in economics with a concentration in multinational management and international finance and an MBA with a major in healthcare management and economics from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.



Margaret Pastuszko

**INSTITUTION BRIEF** Mount Sinai Health System ([mountsinai.org](http://mountsinai.org)) encompasses the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and eight hospitals, as well as a large and expanding ambulatory care network. The eight hospitals – Mount Sinai Beth Israel, Mount Sinai Brooklyn, The Mount Sinai Hospital, Mount Sinai Queens, Mount Sinai St. Luke's, Mount Sinai South Nassau, Mount Sinai West, and New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai – have a vast geographic footprint throughout the New York metropolitan region. The Mount Sinai Hospital is ranked number 14 in the nation by U.S. News & World Report and ranked in the top 20 nationally in eight medical specialties in the 2019-20 "Best Hospitals" guidebook. The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai is also ranked nationally in ophthalmology.

**Mount Sinai Health System is a purpose-driven organization with a long history of supporting its employees, patients, and communities. How do you define Mount Sinai's purpose and how is purpose at the foundation of Mount Sinai's culture?**

Mount Sinai's purpose is to advance healthcare through research and education, and to improve patient outcomes. This is a simple proposition with a great deal of complexity behind it. It starts with a core principle of support for our employees, and results into the support for the communities we serve. It involves continued innovation and research through our Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai that is then translated to the world-class care provided at the bedside. Our purpose is to generate

discoveries and new treatments that change standards, not just for academic institutions, but also for community hospitals and all healthcare providers. Our institutional culture is to strive, advance, improve and innovate. We weave these ideas into the fabric of everything we do.

**What do you see as the biggest challenges facing leading health systems?**

Health systems face a large number of challenges. One of the biggest is to create a

sustainable model to deliver the latest healthcare innovations to those communities most in need. This requires alignment of all the participants in healthcare, not just the providers. Physicians, hospitals, insurance companies and payers, for-profit providers, employers, venture capital investors, as well as federal, state, and local authorities have to come together for success.

**What is your vision for the evolving role of the hospital as health systems grow their ambulatory care and outpatient facilities?**

Hospitals will become smaller, but will still be a critical component of health systems. A health system is much more than a hospital or hospitals. It's a continuum of care, with services delivered at the right time and in the right place. However, we must not lose focus on hospitals where the most critical and acute care is delivered and where we can achieve the collaborative effort of a vast number of specialists and advanced technology.



Mount Sinai Health System on Manhattan's Upper East Side





*Mount Sinai Health System downtown ambulatory location*

**How important is it for Mount Sinai Health System to build a diverse and inclusive workforce to mirror the diversity of its patients and the communities it serves?**

Diversity and inclusiveness is critical to integration with our communities and to our success – how else will you understand the needs of your population if you are not part of it? Integration allows for successful transition of our healthcare customers back into their communities because we can anticipate the needs, challenges and opportunities that exist in those communities.

**Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women in leadership positions in healthcare?**

I believe opportunities in healthcare exist for everyone who wants to make a difference. Today, there are a number of clinical specialties where women represent a majority. Leadership opportunities take time. However, these are happening at Mount Sinai across not only clinical departments, but also corporate areas including legal, technology and strategy. Hopefully, these examples create a roadmap for others in the future. Anything is possible if you work hard and are resolute in your mission and purpose.

**Mount Sinai Health System is deeply engaged in the communities it serves. Will you discuss Mount Sinai’s commitment to community and population health?**

Mount Sinai is highly committed to its communities with a holistic focus on health and well-being, especially for those who live in our immediate community. We have made large investments and inroads in population health over the years and have learned that it takes more than provider efforts to

make it succeed. Challenges remain to make population health sustainable. This has to become the predominant structure in the industry, with the right level of alignment by all parties, and agreement on what success looks like. We believe in this work and we will continue to improve and innovate in this space.

**How critical is it for medical schools to transform their curriculum to best prepare the future leaders in medicine?**

Curriculum transformation for the new generations is critical – not only in medical school, but in every aspect of education including nursing and post-doctoral training. While the foundations of clinical education will always remain, successful leaders in medicine need to become experts in communication with customers, the economics of healthcare, technology, and customer experience. Our medical school and health system will remain at the forefront of curriculum transformation and the education of the future leaders in healthcare.

**How valuable has it been for Mount Sinai Health System to have such an engaged and committed board of trustees?**

Our board of trustees is one of our institutional strengths and keys to our success. The board includes a large number of highly engaged individuals who are always ready to help. The board takes their responsibility seriously and supports the management team, and this was never more visible than during the COVID pandemic when the board worked with us on a daily basis to bring together resources that would have critical impact on saving so many lives in New York.

**What do you tell young people about the types of careers the medical profession offers?**

Healthcare is one of those industries where any career that you can imagine is possible and rewarding, from our frontline providers, nurses and technical and allied health professionals to the corporate disciplines that support it all including finance, IT, analytics, engineering and facilities. These professions are centered on delivering the best and most advanced clinical treatments, identifying future discoveries, and are all part of caring for our patients which is the ultimate mission of our health system. ●



*Mount Sinai Doctors practice*