

Providing the Highest Quality Care

An Interview with Peter P. Semczuk, Senior Vice President and Executive Director, Moses and Wakefield Campus, Montefiore Health System

EDITORS' NOTE Peter Semczuk serves as Senior Vice President and Executive Director of the Moses Campus, Montefiore's largest campus which includes Montefiore Hospital and the Children's Hospital at Montefiore. He is well known for his work in emergency services, having overseen the expansion of Montefiore's Department of Emergency Medicine. He has lectured extensively and received numerous awards in patient satisfaction from eminent industry organizations including Press Ganey and Studer Group. Prior to joining Montefiore, Semczuk was the Associate Director of Operations at North Central Bronx Hospital, a position which primarily focused on leadership development and performance improvement. He holds a BA in economics from Hofstra University, an MPH from Columbia University, and a DDS from New York University. He also completed his general practice residency at the VA Medical Center in Brooklyn. He is a fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine and was recently profiled as one of the HealthLeaders 20 who are making a difference in healthcare.



Peter P. Semczuk

of the Moses and Wakefield Campuses. I manage all operational areas of our largest campus, which includes both an adult hospital and the Children's Hospital at Montefiore. I also lead the Montefiore Faculty Practice Group which employs more than 5,000 associates. My areas of focus include growing outpatient practice locations, recruiting physicians, and improving access to care for both inpatient and outpatient services throughout our catchment area.

How do you describe Montefiore's culture and values?

Montefiore's culture is one of rich tradition and history. From our founding in 1884 by Jewish philanthropists as a care facility for patients with chronic illnesses to our status today as one of the largest healthcare systems in the nation, we are unwavering in our commitment to providing the highest quality care and addressing the underlying socioeconomic factors that impact overall well-being.

We are also a research powerhouse – with Albert Einstein College of Medicine, we are at the forefront of translating scientific breakthroughs into diagnostics and treatments that save lives, particularly in areas like cancer, pediatrics, and cardiac care. Our research-driven care is one of the cornerstones of Montefiore and is a consistent thread that you see across our hospitals and outpatient sites.

How do you balance your time in overseeing both inpatient and outpatient care for Montefiore, and how is the delivery of inpatient care evolving?

Regardless of whether it is inpatient or outpatient care, I'm always focused on the experiences our patients are having – and this doesn't end after care is delivered. We need to be attuned to what happens when a person is leaving and what the follow-up care plan looks like. A perfect example of this philosophy and how inpatient care is evolving is the Discharge Lounge at our Henry and Lucy Moses Division in the Bronx. The Lounge, which opened just over two years ago, cares for approximately one-third of adult patients prior to leaving the hospital.

Instead of staying in a hospital room where one can often hear noise and conversations from the hallway, and which in general tends to be a more stressful environment, when patients are ready to be discharged they are greeted by one of our nurses who brings them to our equivalent of an airport VIP lounge. There, our patients enjoy complementary light refreshments and decompress in a calm environment while waiting for their ride.

Next, the certified nurse assistants who oversee the Lounge bring the patient to their vehicle. These same nurses will call the next day to see how our patient's overall care experience was and ask how

INSTITUTION BRIEF Montefiore Medicine (montefiore.org) is the umbrella organization overseeing both Montefiore Health System and Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Montefiore Health System is comprised of 10 hospitals, including the Children's Hospital at Montefiore and Burke Rehabilitation Hospital, employs more than 33,000 people, and has nearly 8 million patient interactions a year throughout four New York counties: the Bronx, Westchester, Rockland and Orange. In addition, Montefiore recently ranked among the top 1 percent of hospitals in seven specialties by U.S. News & World Report. For more than 100 years, Montefiore has been nationally recognized for innovating new treatments, procedures and approaches to patient care, producing stellar outcomes and raising the bar for health systems around the country and around the world.

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

I am the Senior Vice President of Operations at Montefiore Health System and Executive Director

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Montefiore's Henry and Lucy Moses Division

we can do better. This consistency and personalized approach makes people feel cared for and enables us to quickly identify what is working and address in “real-time” any potential issues.

How do you balance Montefiore’s mission with staying afloat during this challenging economic climate?

Thank you for asking this question. We are incredibly fortunate to have leaders who believe that providing excellent care is good business – those excellent care standards include delivering top quality care to our patients during their hospital stay or outpatient visit, but it also goes beyond that. It is about investing in neighborhood experts like community health workers who advocate for our patients and enable us to most effectively partner with like-minded community-based organizations to

address all too prevalent challenges that exist in the Bronx and Westchester, like food insecurity and inadequate housing and transportation.

All this being said, Montefiore is among the largest employers in New York State and coming out of COVID-19, we contend with national issues such as rising labor costs and inadequate reimbursements. Approximately 85 percent of our patients are covered by Medicare and Medicaid. The remaining 15 percent, which represents payments from commercial insurance, accounts for nearly half of our revenue. This means that as we look to the future, we not only need to work with government leaders to find long-term funding solutions, but we also have to be identifying new ways to expand our academic, high-quality care, and create new revenue streams.

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Will you highlight Montefiore’s Faculty Practice and your priorities for Montefiore’s outpatient care enterprise?

Through our Albert Einstein College of Medicine, we bring world-class research into a physician’s office. In my new role overseeing Montefiore’s Faculty Practice, we are focused on how more patients can access this level of care in their local communities. Locations like Montefiore Einstein Advanced Care in Westchester is paramount to our success in the future and exemplifies this focus. Our number one priority for our outpatient enterprise is to provide first-class patient care and experiences. Each day, we’re building on what this means.

You also oversee Montefiore’s International Department. Where do you see opportunities for growth internationally?

I founded the Montefiore International Department in 2013, and since then we’ve coordinated care for more than 1,900 patients from over 20 countries, making us a global healthcare leader.

We provide primary to tertiary to quaternary care for people at our Bronx campuses. We also see tremendous growth potential in the Middle East, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and in Latin America such as the Dominican Republic. Having these types of partnerships allow us to both advance access to care for people in need and presents new opportunities for medical research, education and training.

How important is it for Montefiore to build a diverse and inclusive workforce to mirror the diversity of the patients and communities it serves?

We must hire associates who mirror and represent the people we care for. The overwhelming majority of our employees live in our communities where we provide services. In our view, you cannot provide adequate services to a community of people unless your workforce appropriately reflects the needs of that community.

What attracted you to a career in healthcare and what has made the industry so special for you?

I wanted to pursue a career where I could give back. I have been very fortunate in life and have been afforded many opportunities. I can think of no greater career where it is so simple to connect your head to your heart. That is what makes both the healthcare industry and working at Montefiore so special for me.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in entering the healthcare field?

I would say to people interested in entering the healthcare field that it is truly a vocation and a calling. It is the kind of work that allows you to make a difference in someone’s life each and every day. Even during the most difficult times, for example the COVID global pandemic, healthcare creates unique opportunities to help others less fortunate, improve their lives and make a meaningful difference. What career could be better than that? ●