

Leading New York's First New Medical School in More Than 40 Years

Streamlining Operations While Fulfilling a Mission

**An Interview with Lawrence Smith, M.D.,
Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, North Shore-LIJ
Health System, and Dean, Hofstra North Shore-LIJ School of Medicine**



Lawrence Smith

EDITORS' NOTE Lawrence Smith has held the position of Chief Medical Officer since September 2006. He is the Founding Dean of the Hofstra North Shore-LIJ School of Medicine, which will admit its first class of 40 students in the summer of 2011. Smith joined North Shore-LIJ in May 2005 as Chief Academic Officer and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs. Prior to joining North Shore-LIJ, Smith was at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, where he served as Dean (beginning in 2002) and Chairman of Medical Education, Founder and Director of the school's Institute for Medical Education, Professor of Medicine, and an attending physician. Previously, he practiced at Stony Brook University Hospital. Smith earned a Bachelor of Science degree in physics from Fordham University and a medical degree from the New York University School of Medicine. His residency in internal medicine at Strong Memorial Hospital was followed by military service as a captain in the Army Medical Corps at Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Denver.

How do you define your role as Chief Medical Officer (CMO), and what key areas are you most focused on?

The way our health system is organized, it's a combination of the traditional role of a CMO managing quality and physician credentialing, and ultimately managing the models of care delivered to patients at the bedside.

But I'm also the senior physician of the whole health system. And that adds a different twist to it. You have to delegate local leadership to the medical directors of the hospitals, because it's impossible to be everywhere with 15 different hospitals and dozens of ambulatory care centers.

I have physician medical directors at every site who understand my values and the goals of the system, and who are in sync with us in managing quality, integrity, and change.

How much of a focus is the strength of the health system's education programs?

For the hospitals with strong intern and residency programs, the culture of education is fundamental to how they deliver care, how they achieve change in care, and the training of the doctors that populate our health system. So the tertiary hospitals with the full cadre of residency programs across every specialty, and even the smaller hospitals with just one residency program, very often have trained a significant number of their own medical staff. The culture of nurturing young clinicians is very present in our system.

What was the thinking behind the creation of the Hofstra North Shore-LIJ School of Medicine?

Multiple hospitals in the health system have played longstanding key roles in educating medical students from other schools.

Not only did we have about 100 of our own residency programs, but we did a lot of teaching for other medical schools. But the students were always visitors and we were delivering someone else's curriculum to their students.

Then two things happened simultaneously: one was the national plea to build new medical schools to fill the physician workforce gap; and the second was that a predominant university in our area, Hofstra University, whose stature had grown from local to regional to a national university, was trying to become home to a medical school with a health care partner.

So the timing on the partnership was perfect. North Shore-LIJ was maturing into being a major national player as was Hofstra University. ●

**An Interview with Mark Solazzo,
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer**



Mark Solazzo

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to his appointment to Chief Operating Officer in 2005, Mark Solazzo served as Chief of Staff and Chief Administrative Officer to the health system's President and Chief Executive Officer Michael Dowling. Before joining North Shore-LIJ in 1995, Solazzo held a number of senior-level positions within the New York State Department of Social Services. During his tenure there, he was responsible for the state's Child Assistance Program. Solazzo culminated his work at the department as the Director of the Bureau of Management and Administrative Support. Solazzo is an adjunct professor at St. Joseph's College in Patchogue, New York. He earned an undergraduate degree from Fordham University, studied at Albany Medical College, and received an M.B.A. with a specialization in health systems management from Union College, Schenectady, New York.

When you look at the 15 hospitals and long-term care facilities within the health system, are they viewed as independent entities or are certain areas linked?

When we started to form the system, we wanted to create a culture that built upon relationships and a common understanding of where we wanted to go as a health system. So we managed the system as one – we look at the bottom line and what is best for the communities we serve.

Is it challenging to put the metrics in place to evaluate those results and how critical has it been to provide consistent, quality care?

It's a work in progress. Over the years, we have built a cohesive management and clinical structure that works well across the system. On any given day, you will find clinicians and administrators from one institution working with those from another institution.

We're focused on three goals: quality, patient experience, and financial performance. Within each of those goals, we identified the metric that we want to concentrate on and the ultimate goal we want to achieve. So there is a great consistency in the line of sight with regard to where we want to go.

Building those relationships, building the management team on both the clinical and administrative side, and mixing them together was critical to getting people on the same page.

So it was all that pre-work that made the work that we're doing now a lot easier.

How much of a focus do you put on innovation from a leadership point of view?

We need to create our own destiny here. We need to react to whatever is happening around us and decide how we're going to adapt to that and design our own destiny.

The message we constantly send out is one of empowering our employees at every level to improve quality, efficiency, and service. Michael Dowling and I believe in getting out of our offices to talk to the employees and go where they're doing the work. Of course, we have formal mechanisms for fostering innovation too; we have what we call an "Idea Forum" where employees can contact leadership with new ideas. Additionally, we have an innovations award that we give out once a year – a competition among all our hospitals – for a team or individual who comes forth with the most innovative idea. ●