

## The Obligation to be Extraordinary



The HSS facility overlooking Manhattan's East River

An Interview with Louis A. Shapiro,  
President and Chief Executive Officer, Hospital for Special Surgery

**EDITORS' NOTE** Louis Shapiro assumed his current position as Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) President and CEO in October 2006. Prior to this, he served as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Geisinger Health System's Clinical Enterprise. He began his career at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh and then joined McKinsey & Company as a leader within their health care practice. Shapiro is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, Vice Chair of the Greater New York Hospital Association Board of Governors 2012-13, and is on the Board of Crutches 4 Kids.



Louis A. Shapiro

**INSTITUTION BRIEF** New York-based Hospital for Special Surgery ([www.hss.edu](http://www.hss.edu)) is internationally recognized as the leading independent academic medical center specializing in orthopedics, rheumatology, and their related specialties. The hospital pioneered the modern-day total knee replacement and continues to build on its success, advance cutting edge research, and develop innovative approaches to diagnosis and treatment, all of which contribute to its global leadership. Outstanding results in quality of care and the patient experience have created a growing demand for its services with people coming to HSS from across the country and around the world. HSS is the first hospital in New York State to achieve its third consecutive designation as a Magnet Hospital by the American Nurses Credentialing Center, the gold standard for nursing excellence. It is the only hospital in New York State that has maintained a significantly lower infection rate than the state average for hip replacement three years in a row. HSS is the official hospital for the World Champion New York Giants, the New York Mets, New York Knicks, New York Liberty and New York Red Bulls, The PGA of America, and New York Road Runners for the ING New York City Marathon.

### What makes HSS work?

It takes extraordinary people to be an extraordinary institution and we have extraordinary people, beginning with our medical staff and extending to each and every member of the HSS family. Our medical staff is the best of the best. They are among the leaders in their field and often times have roots here having started their training at HSS as either residents or fellows. Patients travel great distances for the unsurpassed

diagnostic, surgical, and nonsurgical expertise that can be found here. Even for the most complex conditions, treatment outcomes are excellent and HSS has among the lowest infection and complication rates in the country.

Our success is also a function of our specialty focus – our capabilities and accomplishments in the areas of orthopedics, rheumatology, and their related disciplines, set us apart from all other hospitals. As a specialty institution we are able to focus all of our attention on musculoskeletal medicine and, as a consequence, can achieve a level of performance and outcomes that are hard to achieve for an organization with less focus on a specialty area.

HSS is unique however beyond our specialty focus. Too often overlooked as a differentiating strategy, we spend a great deal of time and effort focusing on our culture. Our culture is at the core of what makes HSS special – the secret ingredient in our success. Everyone is focused on coming together as a team and achieving the same endpoint: providing our patients with an unsurpassed hospital experience. Our patient satisfaction scores have been at the 99th percentile for 16 consecutive quarters compared to other Magnet hospitals in the Press Ganey database. These scores speak volumes about our employees' commitment to excellence and to the delivery of the highest level of care and service to our patients each day.

Our culture can also be found in how we acknowledge our successes. We will celebrate what we have accomplished, but only briefly, and then we quickly turn our attention to the difference between our current performance and the level of performance we expect ourselves to achieve.

**How critical is providing a diverse workforce that mirrors your patient base and does treatment go beyond what is offered within the walls of HSS?**

We have a culturally diverse workforce that matches the needs of patients who come from all over New York City and from around the world.

We also have organized programs where members of our staff go to specific communities to treat and educate people of different cultural backgrounds who might have a higher incidence of developing a certain disease or condition.

Our International Center helps to coordinate and facilitate the clinical and related needs of patients and their families who travel to HSS

from overseas. When they go home, we help to make sure that they continue to receive the care they require in the post-acute phase.

For patients and their families traveling to HSS from throughout the United States, our Coast-to-Coast program's skilled staff is an important resource before and during their stay. They assist with recommendations regarding travel and accommodations, coordination of medical appointments, and any additional special requests.

**How are you taking the knowledge here and transferring it to centers overseas?**

The knowledge that is more scientific in nature is shared in a number of ways including publishing materials and the many lectures that our physicians and scientists give at medical institutions and conferences around the world. We also hold global conferences at HSS. Last year, we brought world experts together to escalate the agenda for research around osteoarthritis, a global problem that hasn't received enough attention.

We also have a joint academic initiative with China that includes programs such as an exchange of orthopedic residents and the use of digital technology so that orthopedic surgeons in China can participate in our grand round lectures at the same time they are taking place at HSS, as well as formal relationships in South America where we are partnering with leading local providers, sharing knowledge with them so they can achieve their goals.

**HSS was the founding organization of the International Society of Orthopaedic Centers (ISOC). What is the purpose of this organization?**

The goal was to bring together the major international thought leaders in orthopaedics to advance the agenda around research and education through collaboration.

There are 14 major centers from around the world and we meet approximately every 18 months to take stock of what we've accomplished, what we're working on, and what we need to work on. In the intervening time periods, those projects are advanced.

**How tough is it to avoid becoming complacent?**

We never talk about what we have accomplished without talking about what we need to do to get better. We're always trying to drive improvements and create new standards of excellence. Because of what HSS is about, we have the obligation to be extraordinary. ●