

## Patient-Centered

An Interview with Catherine Krna,  
Senior Vice President, Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS)

**EDITORS' NOTE** Catherine Krna is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Business School. Prior to joining HSS in 2005, Catherine served as a consultant at McKinsey & Company. She lives in Manhattan with her husband and three children.



Catherine Krna

**COMPANY 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. 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. It is the only hospital in New York State that has maintained a significantly lower infection rate than the state average for hip replacement four 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.

### How do you focus your efforts at HSS?

One of the strengths of HSS is the partnership between its medical staff and executive leadership. I spend a lot of my time building relationships with physicians and working to involve other members of the senior management team. To be effective, I need to have a keen sense of what matters to the physicians and work every day to make sure that we are supporting them.

Another critical component of my job is to focus on growth. Within the past year, I have assumed administrative responsibility for the HSS offsite locations in the regional market. We continue to grow the main campus on the Upper East Side while bringing services closer to patients in the regional community.

**Do employees understand that this is a service competitive business which requires growth?**

When we say we're patient-centered, we mean it. That is a result of great recruitment and a core team that has been at the institution for a long time; it is a testament to the HSS culture. We don't need to remind our employees that we're a customer-service patient-centered place; they know that and live it every day.

It's a competitive environment and changing health care landscape, but our continual recruitment of talented people who want to work 110 percent every day has served us well historically.

### How broad can the offsite locations grow?

We would love to extend much of what exists on the main campus to the regional and the national community. That encompasses physician clinic space, rehabilitation services, advanced imaging, and surgery.

Right now, we manage sites where physicians can see patients. We bring those services to patients who live in Queens, Long Island and Connecticut so they do not necessarily have to come to New York City to see a physician or for post-operative visits. We have been successful in co-locating advanced imaging in these regional sites so patients can get this crucial service closer to home. We also have HSS Spine & Sport in Jupiter, Florida where patients can receive HSS world-class rehabilitation right in their area.

The vision going forward is to provide more of our services to communities within New York State and across state lines because it's more convenient for our patients. These efforts will also hopefully continue to diversify and grow our patient base.

### How do you provide the technology but not lose the relationship aspect?

We're a medium-sized operation growing into a larger one. Up to this point, we have maintained an intimate culture, but we're at the point where staff can no longer guarantee that they're going to run into the colleagues whom they need to see over the course of the day.

One important component of our strategic plan is an integrated, forward-thinking, and detailed IT plan for the next five years that addresses what we need to do to bring the institution to the next level.

With that, though, we are committed to not allowing technology advancements to threaten the intimate nature of our collaborative work environment. Instead, it must support and enhance it. Collaboration is critical to providing the best patient care.

At its best, IT can enable efficiency and create as much time as possible for the clinician to spend directly with patients.

### How are you meeting the international needs and are there opportunities for expansion overseas?

We are continually bombarded with proposals from institutions all over the world asking our help to enable them to do abroad what we do in New York City.

We are now mostly focused on taking care of our patients who came from 90 countries this year. As we take care of patients here, positive word-of-mouth becomes key in their home countries and encourages others to travel to us. We're also blessed with a medical staff that travels around the world lecturing and teaching and, as a result, building our reputation.

We are in partnerships with a few like-minded institutions in Brazil with whom we have created educational programs. These institutions are pursuing partnerships with HSS because they see a market need and opportunity to improve musculoskeletal care in their home countries. They are watching, in some cases, patients within their regions travel elsewhere for care.

When considering any partnership, we look for like-minded and mission-focused institutions where we can consult and help the clinicians and administrations improve the services they offer.

### Despite the various challenges doctors face today in giving the best care, HSS continues to provide excellent service. How is that achieved?

The doctors here are so focused on what they do that they are as efficient a set of clinicians as you can find by virtue of their specialization.

It's a different place in which to see patients and in which to operate. A 9-to-5 day doesn't exist here; they are all so committed to making sure they spend the necessary time individually with each patient. The combination of their determination and work ethic as well as their specialization, along with the support we provide them, creates an efficient environment to support their practice and their time with patients.

For example, a patient will see the surgeon for a certain amount of time, but he/she will also spend time with other clinicians and members of the competent, hardworking team that helps take care of all of the other components of that patient's care. Our patients and their families feel as though they have been well taken care of because of these teams. ●