

## From Cradle to Grave

**An Interview with Tochi Iroku-Malize, M.D.,  
Chair of Family Medicine, Northwell Health**

## An Open-Minded Culture

**An Interview with Andrea Vambutas, M.D.,  
Chair-Otolaryngology, North Shore University Hospital  
and Long Island Jewish Medical Center**

**INSTITUTION BRIEF** Northwell Health ([northwell.edu](http://northwell.edu)), formerly the North Shore-LIJ Health System, is the nation's 14th largest healthcare system and the largest in New York State, with annual operating revenue of \$9.5 billion. Northwell includes 21 hospitals and more than 450 outpatient physician practices throughout Long Island, Queens, Staten Island, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Westchester, and a vast network of skilled-nursing, long-term care, home care, rehabilitation, and hospice care services and urgent care. Northwell is making powerful breakthroughs in research at The Feinstein Institute for Medical Research, which is at the forefront of a new field of research called bioelectronic medicine. By developing nerve-stimulating technologies that regulate the molecular targets underlying disease, this revolutionary approach promises to deliver therapies superior to pharmaceuticals in terms of efficacy, safety and cost, without significant side effects. Northwell is training the next generation of medical professionals at the visionary Hofstra Northwell School of Medicine – New York State's first allopathic medical school in about 40 years – and the School of Graduate Nursing and Physician Assistant Studies. In addition, Northwell offers premium health care insurance to individuals, families, and businesses through the CareConnect insurance company. Northwell is New York State's largest private employer, with a workforce of more than 61,000. The health system's owned hospitals and long-term care facilities house more than 6,600 beds, employ more than 15,000 nurses, and have affiliations with nearly 13,600 physicians.



Tochi Iroku-Malize

**EDITORS' NOTE** Tochi Iroku-Malize is also a Professor of Family Medicine at the Hofstra Northwell School of Medicine and Director of the Family Medicine Residency Program at Southside Hospital in Bay Shore, New York. She has served at Southside Hospital as a hospitalist and Director of the hospitalist program. Board certified in family medicine as well as hospice and palliative medicine, Dr. Iroku-Malize is a Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians and a Senior Fellow in Hospital Medicine of the Society of Hospital Medicine. Dr. Iroku-Malize received her medical degree from the University of Nigeria and completed her residency in family medicine at Southside Hospital. She earned a Master of Public Health degree in health policy and management from Columbia University's School of Public Health.

### Would you talk about the strength of the family medicine program?

Family medicine has a long history within the system. We have three family medicine residency programs that were part of community hospitals. The residents learned on the ambulatory site but also managed patients when they were on the in-patient side.

In 2011, when we created the medical school, it was the foresight of Dr. Smith (Northwell Health Physician-in-Chief Lawrence G. Smith) to create a Department of Family Medicine to reflect what was happening in terms of education and clinical operations within the health system.

An understanding has since developed that primary care is very important for healthcare systems, especially if it's integrated.

#### How broad is family medicine?

It's from cradle to grave. The educational piece across the country involves learning how to care for newborn, pediatric, adolescent, adult, and geriatrics, and things like women's health and prenatal care, and learning about deliveries is included in that.

The common denominator is taking into account the social aspects and family dynamics that have to be dealt with – the behavioral medicine aspects of their care is incorporated.

As medicine progresses, other specialties realize they have to incorporate the psychosocial component of taking care of a patient.

#### What makes this health system so special?

Leadership is huge. Michael Dowling (President and CEO) allows employees the freedom to create and that works for me because I'm always looking to progress. We always look to make ourselves better and I thrive in that environment. This health system has truly allowed me to grow. ●



Andrea Vambutas

**EDITORS' NOTE** Dr. Andrea Vambutas is also Vice Chair of Academy Affairs the Department of Otolaryngology at the Hofstra Northwell School of Medicine. In addition, she is Director for the Center of Hearing & Balance at the New York Head & Neck Institute, Medical Director of LIJ Medical Center's Apelian Cochlear Implant Program, and Professor of Otolaryngology & Molecular Medicine at the Hofstra Northwell School of Medicine. Vambutas was instrumental in developing the Apelian Cochlear Implant Center, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2011. She is a graduate of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

### What progress has Northwell Health made in addressing ear, nose, and throat issues?

The strength of the health system is the breadth of hospitals and number of patients treated. The health system screens over 20,000 infants per year for newborn hearing. Prior to the New York State law requiring newborn hearing screening, our center was part of the New York Demonstration Project to do newborn hearing screenings to prove their value.

It was recognized that for infants with hearing loss, if they're fit with hearing aids and given speech therapy by six months of age, their ability to develop expressive language is dramatically improved.

Fifteen years ago, we started a cochlear implant center here where we provide services for adults and children. For the children, we go into schools and help map the cochlear implant and we provide services to the school. It's a comprehensive program we're quite proud of.

Similarly, within head and neck cancer, we have partnered with The Feinstein Institute for Medical Research and we have a new affiliation with Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory for early stage clinical trials, trying to do everything possible to advance cancer care in the health system.

We have a large group of pediatric otolaryngologists that also treat these patients and we have entered into a clinical affiliation with ENT & Allergy Associates, which is a very large single specialty group for otolaryngology in the tri-state area.

#### Are there opportunities you see for women to lead at senior levels within the industry?

While I would like to see more females in senior leadership roles across the system, there are currently a good number of them in this institution and they're respected, which is huge. ●