

Women LEADERS

High Tech With High Touch

An Interview with Rebecca Starck, M.D.,
President, Cleveland Clinic Avon Hospital



Cleveland Clinic Avon Hospital

EDITORS' NOTE Dr. Rebecca Starck assumed her current post in 2014. Earlier that year, she was named an associate medical director on Cleveland Clinic's Regional Administrative Team. She has served as chair of the Clinic's Regional Ob/Gyn department since 2010. Under her leadership, Cleveland Clinic's Avon Women's Health Associates was established in 2005, and she was later appointed to the Cleveland Clinic staff in the Ob/Gyn & Women's Health Institute in 2010. Starck began practicing at Fairview Hospital in 1999. Starck graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School and completed her residency training at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan.



Rebecca Starck

INSTITUTION BRIEF Cleveland Clinic Avon Hospital (my.clevelandclinic.org/locations/avon-hospital) is shaping up to be Lorain County's most high-tech, patient-friendly hospital, with a spectrum of services, from critical care to orthopaedic surgery and outpatient procedures. It's a first for Lorain County residents, with easy access to a full-service Cleveland Clinic hospital. The new 212,000-square-foot, five-story facility opened in November 2016 and sits adjacent to Avon's Cleveland Clinic Richard E. Jacobs Health Center. Two new operating rooms add to the four already on-site. Patients are able to have various surgical procedures, from joint replacements and abdominal surgery to outpatient procedures, such as colonoscopies and pain management.

What is the key mission for Cleveland Clinic Avon Hospital?

Our goal at Avon Hospital is to provide high quality, safe care in a comfortable, compassionate environment. We aim for "high tech with high touch."

Cleveland Clinic Avon Hospital is the first clinic community hospital built from the ground up in Northeast Ohio, and it is the first in-patient Cleveland Clinic hospital in Lorain County.

In building a new hospital, we had the opportunity to start from scratch and build it with everything we had learned over the past 100 years of providing world-class care through Cleveland Clinic.

We started with mock-up rooms at one of our hospital facilities and elicited feedback from patients to determine what they were seeking in a hospital room. In addition to the mock up room, we held several vision groups to elicit feedback of

what makes a hospital visit exceptional, beginning with the assumption that at Cleveland Clinic they will receive the highest quality care. Three areas of focus emerged: the first is personalized attention because patients want to be made to feel they're the most important people in the hospital. The second is that they want to be comfortable in their environment. The third is impeccable communication – patients want to have a dialogue that can help them understand where they're at in their health and wellness journey.

This also applies to our caregivers – we want them to come to work and have comfortable and personalized interactions with each other and share effective communication.

One of the goals of the hospital has been to utilize our resources efficiently across the health system, recognizing that we are not just one single hospital but an entity within the entire Cleveland Clinic hospital system. With that, we can utilize our resources more effectively and optimize our operations within the full Cleveland Clinic health system.

The entire design of the hospital has been built around Patients First, and around providing an efficient place to deliver care.

Another goal was to use technology to leverage the care we're providing in the hospital. We wanted to make sure that digital platform was flexible for the future of the hospital. That culture of high tech, innovation and continuous improvement is part of the fabric and DNA of who we are at Avon Hospital.

We were careful to choose IT systems that improve the safety and care of patients or improve caregiver efficiency, which adds value to the care of patients.

For instance, we have in place communication devices that allow our caregivers in real time to talk to one another from anywhere in the hospital. Be it environmental services or a nurse calling to another nurse, they literally carry around a small walkie-talkie through which they can call out to one another.

That might feel impersonal, but without this technology, they would have to return to their work stations, pick up a phone, page or call someone, and wait for that person to call back.

In addition, we have a computer in every room. By bringing the patient's health record to the bedside, we have an opportunity to involve the patient in their healthcare. If a patient understands

their own disease state, we believe they have a better opportunity to improve their health and wellness.

We also have an interactive patient TV that is linked to the patient health record, so the patient can interface with their health record while in bed.

Teamwork has been a big focus at Avon Hospital and we have implemented interdisciplinary rounds including the physician, nurse, pharmacist, care management, advanced practice provider and physical therapist. The rounding takes place in the patient's room, and they discuss the plan of care for the day so the patient and family members who are present have an understanding and have the opportunity to ask questions during team rounds.

As you are building a team from scratch, how important is it to have the diversity of your patient base mirrored within the workforce?

We recognize that everyone on the team has different perspectives. We continue to seek out new and diverse ideas and ask every member of the team to apply their background and thoughts around who we are at Avon Hospital.

We also want our leaders to have a sense of continuous improvement, so we steadily improve the workspace and the care delivery model we have here.

None of this can happen unless every individual on the team walks in with integrity and authenticity. We all elevate each other to an unsurpassed level of care.

How important is to maintain patient relationships in your current role?

I went into medicine to be a physician and I learn every day from patients. Part of my time is still spent in direct patient care, and that keeps me at the forefront of what patients want. If I can keep that as the foundation of what I'm doing, when I apply that to leadership, strategy, building a culture, and building a team, as well as recognizing that excellence in care really matters, there is no question that continuing to see patients allows me to be a better hospital administrator.

Are opportunities available for women to lead in the industry?

I never recognized my gender as a barrier. No matter what industry we're in, it's about going forward, and putting yourself at the table.

In addition, I always try to look for individual input and to support people in their journeys. As a good leader, it's important to know one's own passion and to set a vision, but it's also about helping others find their passion. Developing others is such an important part of the process when we're building a team. ●