

A Sense of Belonging

**An Interview with Alfredo Cabrera,
System Senior Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer, Montefiore Health System**

EDITORS' NOTE *Alfredo Cabrera joined Montefiore in 2012 as Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer. Prior to joining Montefiore, he spent 20 years at PepsiCo, directing personnel for South America, staffing for Pepsi Cola International at its headquarters in New York, and then leading the HR strategy globally for R&D Beverages and PepsiCo Worldwide Flavors. He has also held human resources positions at Exxon Argentina across the organization, from headquarters to operations in the field.*



Alfredo Cabrera

INSTITUTION BRIEF *As the academic health system and University Hospital for Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Montefiore Health System (montefiore.org) is nationally recognized for clinical excellence—breaking new ground in research, training the next generation of healthcare leaders, and delivering science-driven, patient-centered care. Montefiore is ranked among the top hospitals nationally and regionally by U.S. News & World Report. For more than 100 years, Montefiore has been innovating new treatments, new procedures, and new approaches to patient care, producing stellar outcomes and raising the bar for health systems regionally and nationally.*

How has the role of the chief human resources officer evolved and how ingrained is it within business strategy?

Over the past 30 years, the role has greatly transformed. It used to be solely an administrative function. Today, it requires a strategic thinker with a business mindset; someone who can help transform the culture of an organization to achieve business goals.

Years ago, the function was mostly about hiring, firing and administering benefits.

Today, the equation is much more robust. CHROs need to focus on career development, succession planning, engagement, coaching, etc. This fundamental change means that the CHRO is now embedded into the strategic planning and positioning of the company.

How challenging is it to maintain culture when Montefiore has grown so rapidly?

Culture is very important. Montefiore has grown to include 11 hospitals. We are very

respectful of each member hospital's culture. No matter which Montefiore hospital you work in, our culture values respect, diversity, collaboration and teamwork. This is very important to ensure that each individual feels they are part of a team.

Change to an organization's culture takes time. We are working with all of our member hospitals to see where there are commonalities and where we can enhance each other's cultures. Even though we are a large organization, our employees still feel

that they are part of a tightly knit family, working together to solve patient and community problems.

How critical is diversity and inclusion to Montefiore's continued success?

Diversity and inclusion are part of our strategic plan. It's embedded in everything we do from top to bottom.

Fostering diversity and inclusion in the right way is a significant competitive advantage leading to greater success, innovation and clinical excellence, among other things. However, the fundamental reason to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion for Montefiore is that it is the right thing to do. We continue to build an environment where associates can feel safe to communicate issues and identify effective solutions for delivering the best patient care.

At Montefiore, there are specific objectives we're looking to achieve when integrating diversity and inclusion into the overall strategic plan. We're looking to improve engagement at a systemwide level; improve patient experience and the ability to meet the language needs for all of our patients; and create gender equity in influential leadership positions.

Currently, we are implementing unconscious bias training. This helps associates address their own biases and learn how to dismantle them in order to engage more effectively with their colleagues and patients.

We're also offering a cultural competency training that is unique to the healthcare paradigm and enables associates to serve different patient populations better.

We have taken the American Hospital Association's #123forEquity Pledge. The goal of this is to eliminate healthcare disparities and improve overall health in the communities we serve.

What are the key benefits of a diverse and inclusive culture and how do you track its impact on the organization?

Diversity and inclusion leads us to new perspectives and approaches to how we do our best work.

When we have people on a team who think differently – and from different angles – the output of ideas is richer and more innovative.

By applying a diversity and inclusion lens to all aspects of our work, we can improve data collection and patient satisfaction; reduce care disparities across various patient populations; reduce the number of missed medical visits; improve the efficiency of care, services and utilization patterns; and also increase cost savings that lead to financial success.

We are always examining effective ways to foster and enhance a sense of belonging, which can be customized for each of the communities we support.

We truly value diversity with respect to all our business operations and it's clear that diversity can be leveraged as a competitive advantage. In order to quantify progress and success of our efforts, diversity metrics have to be aligned with key organizational values and goals.

How important is it to have strong employee engagement in these efforts?

At Montefiore, we feel we're doing the right things to engage employees and we are always looking to engage them where it matters most.

We conduct engagement surveys to see what our employees want and need. Based on that, we take measures and we define new objectives, such as development of specific training. We always look at the tools we have to ensure we are engaging our population in the best possible way.

Today, companies are always looking to show their employees purpose, and this is very evident here at Montefiore. Social responsibility is also very important and this is always at the forefront as we serve our communities, which are very diverse, from the Bronx into Westchester.

What advice do you give young people to help them build successful careers?

People should ask themselves which issues they are most passionate about and why, and they should consider taking a lead on those. It's also about where they would like to establish their own legacy. Have a mentor, look for examples of successful people in your field and make every effort to achieve your career objectives. ●