

# Improving Health Outcomes

An Interview with **Mara M. Minguéz, MD, MSc,**  
Assistant Chief Medical Officer, Community Affairs, and Medical Director, Lang Youth Medical Program, NewYork-Presbyterian

**EDITORS' NOTE** Dr. Mara Minguéz is also an Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics and Public Health at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and is board-certified in Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. She is a clinical preceptor at NewYork-Presbyterian's School-Based Health Centers, located in busy high schools in Northern Manhattan and the Bronx, where she is responsible for the clinical care of adolescents as well as the teaching of medical students, pediatric residents and adolescent medicine fellows. She has been involved in research evaluations that have demonstrated the impact of school-based health centers on reproductive health and preventive care services in adolescents in New York City and has conducted a comprehensive evaluation of school-based health centers in the Dominican Republic. She currently serves as faculty for the Foundations of Clinical Medicine course at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons. Dr. Minguéz is a graduate of Tulane University School of Medicine and did her pediatric residency at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center.



Mara M. Minguéz

**INSTITUTION BRIEF** *NewYork-Presbyterian (nyp.org) is one of the nation's most comprehensive, integrated academic healthcare systems, encompassing 10 hospital campuses across the Greater New York area, more than 200 primary and specialty care clinics and medical groups, and an array of telemedicine services. A leader in medical education, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital is the only academic medical center in the nation affiliated with two world-class medical schools, Weill Cornell Medicine and Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons. This collaboration means patients have access to the country's leading physicians, the full range of medical specialties, latest innovations in care, and research that is developing cures and saving lives.*

## Will you discuss your role and area of focus within NewYork-Presbyterian?

I have the privilege to balance between being a medical provider, administrator and educator. In my role as a medical provider, I see patients at our

school-based health centers located within busy New York City public high schools. As an administrator, I work to develop and strengthen existing relationships with NewYork-Presbyterian's communities by working with elected officials, community-based organizations and community health partners and physicians. I am incredibly engaged in the conversation between our hospital and the community stakeholders. I also have the privilege to be the medical provider of our Lang Youth Medical Program which aims to increase minority representation in the

## How critical is it to focus on population health when addressing the challenges in healthcare?

It is critical. We realize that with healthcare delivery, in order to improve outcomes, we have to look outside of our four walls because that's where our patients spend most of their time. We must use comprehensive strategies to improve access, decrease cost and, most importantly, improve healthcare outcomes. The best healthcare practice includes a care plan that takes into account the social needs that affect their patient's health and well-being, also known as social determinants of health. Understanding where our patients live, what they eat, their education levels and behaviors are crucial to improving overall outcomes.

For example, we can evaluate the environment of the patient with asthma in order to understand why they continue to be rehospitalized. Being out in the community is one of the most effective ways to do this, otherwise we are not going to move the needle on population health.

## Will you provide an overview of the Lang Youth Medical Program at NewYork-Presbyterian?

The Lang Youth Medical Program is a six-year, hospital-based, medical enrichment program in the Washington Heights community for youth who are interested in a career in the health sciences. Our mission is to foster their interest in medicine and provide them with the resources they need to achieve their goals.

The vision of the program is to increase the representation of minorities in healthcare. We want to motivate youth in our surrounding community to come back and work with us to provide care for the community, and for our hospital workforce to reflect the population we serve.

The Lang Youth Medical Program enables young people to be able to understand healthcare, understand the body systems, and understand community and global health work. We also provide students with a lot of support in the process of applying to college.

During the program, we provide opportunities within the hospital to intern or have other experiences that help students to understand healthcare delivery in all its different aspects. This provides a broad perspective of all the different disciplines within the health careers.

We target underserved populations and usually take only 14 to 16 youth from the community, specifically from District Six. They stay with us throughout the six years. We find that it is imperative to have them throughout that time to really see an impact and it has worked very well.

We also work closely with the families and provide them with a number of different workshops and resources. I'm very proud of this program because it's unique in that it is housed in the hospital. The hospital is immersed in the education of the community which helps lift up its residents.

## NewYork-Presbyterian serves a diverse population. How important is it that this level of diversity is mirrored within the workforce at NewYork-Presbyterian?

Diversity is not only a privilege, but a crucial need for our success. We bring together different backgrounds, perspectives and talents to achieve a common goal. A diverse workforce benefits the entire institution and the patients we serve. There is a vast amount of literature that describes how institutions that prioritize diversity and inclusion lead to increased productivity, employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and profitability.

## How valuable is it for you to be a part of an institution that fosters opportunities for women to grow and lead?

I am proud to be one of those women who has been given the opportunity to show our strengths, our skills and our abilities. Being recognized for my hard work and skill set has been crucial in my journey and a strong motivator to mentor all those who follow in our path. I cannot speak highly enough of our leaders and their perseverance in supporting women leaders. It is evident as you sit in a meeting and look around the room to see how much they have really fostered an inclusive environment for women leaders. As a community, the perspectives that women bring to the table are essential and I would like to believe that our general advancement as a nation has a lot to do with the changing landscape in the faces who lead us. ●