

# Compassionate Care

**An Interview with Laura L. Forese, MD, MPH, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, NewYork-Presbyterian**

**EDITORS' NOTE** Dr. Laura Forese is the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of NewYork-Presbyterian, one of the nation's most comprehensive, integrated academic healthcare systems. Dr. Forese has ultimate operational responsibility for the NewYork-Presbyterian enterprise, including 10 hospital campuses, 200 primary and specialty care clinics and medical groups, more than 45,000 employees and affiliated physicians, and more than \$9 billion in revenue. Under Dr. Forese's leadership, NewYork-Presbyterian launched an innovative suite of digital health services called NYP OnDemand, implemented groundbreaking employee programs for paid parental leave and respite care, and achieved significant gains in patient satisfaction scores as well as employee engagement and front-line empowerment by focusing on building a culture of respect. Among Dr. Forese's top priorities and accomplishments is the regionalization and standardization of financial, operational, and clinical practices across the enterprise so that every patient receives the same exceptional standard of care no matter where they go in the NewYork-Presbyterian system. Active in multiple healthcare and civic organizations, Dr. Forese chairs the hospital board of the NIH Clinical Research Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland; she is also a Trustee of Princeton University, a board member of the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation and of LiveOnNY, and previously served on the board of a healthcare related public company. She has been named among the 100 most influential people in healthcare nationally, the top 25 women leaders, and the 50 most influential physician executives by Modern Healthcare magazine. Dr. Forese has also been named among the 50 most powerful women in New York by Crain's Business, and has been honored as Mother of the Year by the American Cancer Society.

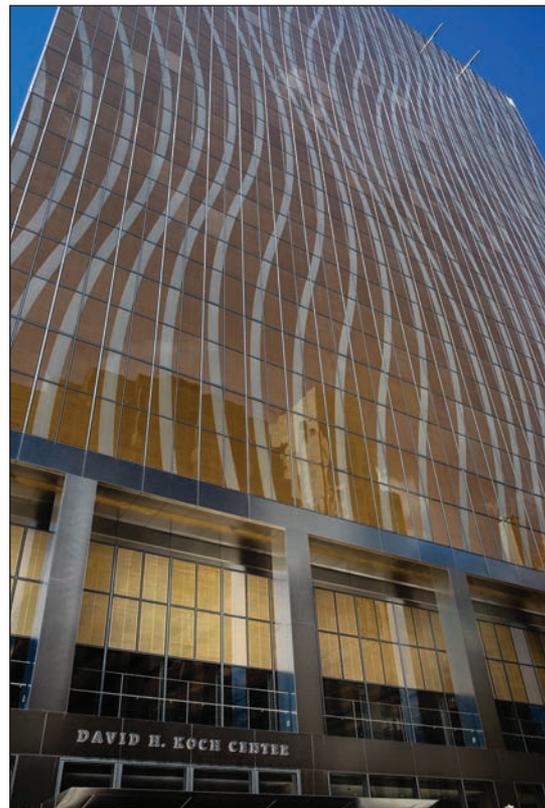


Laura L. Forese

*in patient care, education, research, and community service at ten hospital campuses: NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center, NewYork-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Allen Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Westchester Division, NewYork-Presbyterian Lower Manhattan Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Lawrence Hospital in Bronxville, NewYork-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital and NewYork-Presbyterian Queens.*

## Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?

I'm the Chief Operating Officer for NewYork-Presbyterian, a role I've been in for five years. I'm responsible for overseeing the daily operations of our system to ensure our staff thrives and we deliver the highest quality



NewYork-Presbyterian David H. Koch Center

**INSTITUTION BRIEF** Located in New York City, NewYork-Presbyterian ([nyp.org](http://nyp.org)) is affiliated with two of the nation's leading medical colleges, Weill Cornell Medicine and Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons. NewYork-Presbyterian provides state-of-the-art inpatient, ambulatory, and preventive care in all areas of medicine, and is committed to excellence

care to our patients. I originally entered the medical field as a practicing orthopedic surgeon but have been in hospital executive positions for the past 20 years. I often get asked if I miss practicing, and the truth is that while that was an incredibly important part of my career trajectory, my current role is very fulfilling. I thrive off the challenge of finding new opportunities and easier ways to operate within the NewYork-Presbyterian system, and most importantly removing barriers. My top priority is to make sure that our employees can focus on what they do best – caring for our communities.

## How do you define NewYork-Presbyterian's mission and purpose?

NewYork-Presbyterian is one of the nation's most comprehensive, integrated academic healthcare delivery systems. We are dedicated to providing the highest quality, most compassionate care, and service to patients in the New York metropolitan area, nationally, and throughout the globe. Our mission is to care for everyone who walks through our doors. Everyone needs healthcare and the lights of our hospitals are always on. We are deeply connected to local communities and have a long-standing commitment to understanding and serving their needs from the everyday to the extraordinary.

## How proud are you to see the resilience of NewYork-Presbyterian's workforce as it has been on the front lines of fighting the pandemic?

I'm so incredibly proud of our employees. This pandemic has continued for almost two years and while many of us within the hospital system are trained to manage emergencies and traumatic events, the impacts of COVID-19 have really tested our strength. Our workforce at NewYork-Presbyterian, spread across 10 campuses and five boroughs, has sacrificed so much to support the continued safety and care of our patients. In medicine, we take an oath to serve and protect, and I couldn't be more thankful to our employees for going over and above during one of the worst public health crises of our time.

## How is NewYork-Presbyterian supporting the emotional and mental health wellbeing of its workforce coming out of the pandemic?

It's critical that we remain vigilant to make sure that our staff's emotional and mental health well-being is supported. Throughout

the pandemic, we domiciled over 3,000 of our employees in either dormitories or hotels who were concerned about going home and infecting a loved one, as well as providing four meals a day so that they did not have to worry about food. We offered services for kids, such as day camps or youth work programs, to ease the burden of childcare. We also arranged a bus service with over 80 buses so that they did not have to take mass transit to work.

Now that we've entered a different phase of the pandemic, where a sense of normal feels a bit closer, we need to consider long-term services for our employees. For example, in March 2020, we created CopeNYP, an in-house pandemic-driven acute crisis support program that has now been added to NewYork-Presbyterian's Employee Assistance Program. The CopeNYP program was developed by clinical psychologists and administrative leaders in anticipation of a significant pandemic-driven elevation in mental health needs among health-care workers. It is available to all hospital staff, including frontline workers, general hospital, and support staff.

As a member of our leadership team, it's incredibly important that we remain aware of how our employees are feeling to implement solutions that support their health and well-being.

**How critical is it to focus on lessons learned in fighting COVID in order to be most effectively prepared for future public health crises?**

It's extremely critical to retain everything we've learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. As quickly as our system pivoted to accommodate the initial surge in Spring 2020, we were still unprepared due to extraneous factors including PPE supply shortages and manufacturing issues. However, as we continue to navigate the pandemic, we're avidly incorporating what we've learned into our everyday operations as unfortunately, another public health crisis may happen again. We've set up task forces with employees across all disciplines, including infectious diseases experts, who will continually evaluate how to be wholly prepared for future events.

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The pandemic has also exposed a long history of racial and health disparities across the United States that must be addressed. At NewYork-Presbyterian, we have dedicated time and resources to this issue for many years and with the launch of the Dalio Center for Health Justice, we will continue to identify and find solutions to the systemic inequalities that cause health inequities across the communities we serve.

**Will you highlight NewYork-Presbyterian's focus on building a diverse and inclusive workforce that mirrors the diversity of the patients and communities it serves?**

Employing and maintaining a diverse workforce is critical to our mission of being able to serve communities and people of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, races, ethnicities, cultures, sexual orientations, religions and genders. By doing this, we not only create impact at an institutional level by having diversity of thought, but it also positively impacts our patients, the care they receive, and our support of communities at large.

**Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry?**

Having spent my career working in a historically male-dominated field, I am acutely aware

of the value of having different perspectives at the table – whether gender, race or ethnicity. It's exciting to see the difference now from when I first entered medicine and the increasing number of women in positions of influence and leadership. However, women still only account for 18 percent of hospital CEOs and 16 percent of all deans and department chairs in the United States, which means there is more work to be done.

At NewYork-Presbyterian, we are making sure that women continue to be accurately represented in leadership roles, with 50 percent of our leadership (C-suite/SVP-level) being women. Our system is made up of a vibrant, diverse community of doctors, nurses, and staff. In fact, I am very proud of the Women Physicians Initiative of NewYork-Presbyterian that seeks to make our hospital the best place in the country for female physicians to work, train, and flourish.

**What advice do you offer to young people interested in pursuing a career in medicine?**

Healthcare is fundamental to the greater good and health of the population, and if that wasn't clear to people before the pandemic, it's certainly evident now. Working in healthcare is an extremely rewarding career because you are always part of a team, no matter your role. It's so gratifying to know that you can partner with brilliant colleagues to make a significant difference in the lives of many every single day.

I encourage young people to get involved by checking to see if their local hospitals have volunteer or mentorship programs. At NewYork-Presbyterian, the Lang Youth Medical Program enables our system to offer a six-year science enrichment program to inspire and prepare students in the Washington Heights and Inwood school districts of New York City. We help them explore careers in healthcare and become future leaders who give back to their communities. Every year, graduates of the Lang Youth Medical Program go to college, enter the healthcare profession, and many alumni return to take positions at NewYork-Presbyterian.

The next generation is the future of medicine. It's extremely important that we, as today's leaders, mentor and help shape the bright minds of the future. ●