

The Cornerstone of Healthcare

An Interview with Launette Woolforde, EdD, DNP, Chief Nursing Officer, Lenox Hill Hospital, Lenox Health Greenwich Village and Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital, Northwell Health

EDITORS' NOTE *Launette Woolforde, EdD, DNP, is a renowned expert in nursing and education. At Northwell Health, she serves as chief nursing officer of the health system's Manhattan properties, including Lenox Hill Hospital, Lenox Health Greenwich Village and Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital. Dr. Woolforde joined Northwell in 2005, where she has held several clinical leadership roles. She has also served in the academic setting as a professor at several nursing schools.*



Launette Woolforde

Prior to her role overseeing nursing care in Manhattan, Dr. Woolforde was Northwell's Vice President of Nursing Education and Professional Development, responsible for a broad scope of strategic efforts and educational programs that influences more than 18,500 nurses across the health system. She is also an assistant professor at the Donald & Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell. She is an inductee of Columbia University – Teachers College Hall of Fame, a fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine, and a fellow of the esteemed American Academy of Nursing. Dr. Woolforde's professional achievements include co-leading Northwell to become the first health system to earn Center of Excellence in Nursing Education status from the National League for Nursing. She also co-authored the current national Scope and Standards of Practice for Nursing Professional Development. She has earned numerous degrees, including a Doctor of Nursing Practice from Case Western Reserve University and a Doctor of Education from Columbia University, Teachers College.

How proud are you to see the strength and resilience of Northwell Health's nursing team as it was on the front lines of the pandemic?

Words cannot describe the pride I feel when I think of the many ways that nursing led from the front lines as we faced an unknown illness that would turn into a global pandemic. The spring of 2020 in New York was like nothing I have ever experienced in my career, or in my life for that matter. I have always known the strength, resilience, innovation and dedication of nurses. Nurses are the cornerstone of healthcare. Whether at the bedside, in the background, or in the boardroom, nurses bring holistic views that include treating not just a person's acute health problem, but caring for the whole person and their family.

These past two years have been challenging both physically and mentally for nurses and other healthcare team members. The pandemic brought us to a standstill as it took over our lives and as such, the world got a glimpse into what nurses do day in and day out. Up until recently, I think many people underestimated or simply didn't understand nurses' roles. Nurses are life savers; highly skilled caregivers who bring a combination of extensive knowledge and empathy to the work they do.

Northwell Health nurses are among the best there are. I was amazed to see how many nurses came forward from other areas to work alongside our front line team. Nurses who had not been at the bedside in years, nurses who worked in non-clinical areas – all were willing to go to where help was needed most in order to support each other and help save lives. Northwell Health has done an exceptional job of providing the resources necessary for nurses to provide safe, high-quality care and that was especially evident during the height of the pandemic in our New York area. I remain honored to be a nurse and humbled by the bravery and compassion of my colleagues.

What are your key priorities for Northwell Health's Manhattan properties in order to make sure it remains an industry leader in nursing?

My key priorities focus on executing the mission and vision for Northwell Health across our Manhattan region. I am driven by our strategic plan and ensuring that, as we strive to be the top provider of care, nurses are integral in driving us toward the achievement of our goals. Improving efficiency in our workflow and care delivery models in order to improve quality while reducing cost and waste is a priority. Advancing our care excellence in ways that attract skilled providers to join our team and entice patients to choose our facilities as their care destination are among my top priorities. In 2020, our Manhattan region earned Magnet designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Magnet Recognition is granted to organizations that exemplify many aspects of excellence in its structure and outcomes. It is acknowledged as a gold standard for excellence in care, rooted in nursing. Furthermore, Lenox Hill Hospital was ranked the #4 hospital in New York and was nationally ranked in seven adult specialties by *U.S. News & World Report*. These achievements are the result

of careful attention to improvement strategies and I will continue to build on the great foundation we have in place.

What do you see as the top issues facing the profession of nursing today?

Well-being of nurses is a top priority. The pandemic took a toll on everyone, in many different ways, and we are seeing that the impact is still being felt and dealt with by nurses and the entire healthcare team. Nurses are trying to balance their own emotional health and well-being with increased feelings of stress, physical and emotional fatigue, and burnout. As we continue to look toward the future of healthcare, particular attention must be paid to the well-being of our caregivers.

Another top issue for nursing is maximizing the ability to attract and retain nurses in order to keep pace with the demands of healthcare. Identifying retention strategies, ways to keep the wisdom in the profession as seasoned nurses retire, and delivering care in more creative ways are key. Care is becoming increasingly complex and we must focus on increasing nursing pipelines and increasing diversity within the workforce, especially in leadership. Nurse leaders in academia and in practice will need to partner even further to enable qualified students to pursue their goals of becoming nurses and to ensure that they are prepared for the rapidly changing realities of healthcare delivery. It's imperative that nurses practice at the highest level of our education and training as we comprise the largest profession in the workforce and we make a critical impact in the care experience and outcomes.

What advice do you offer young people interested in building a career in nursing?

This is a great time to be a nurse. I always wanted to be a nurse, so I never really entertained anything else, but little did I know that nursing was so multifaceted. I only knew of bedside nursing and that was what I aspired for. Today, nurses are bedside clinical experts, educators, hospital executives, at-home care providers, informaticists, healthcare navigators, researchers and so much more.

I encourage people of all ages, not just young people, to explore nursing and see if it's for you. For 19 years in a row, nursing has been deemed the most trusted profession. I would say it is arguably the most rewarding profession as well. To be able to provide care across the lifespan provides great fulfillment not just for those receiving the care, but especially to those entrusted to provide it. ●