

# Service Excellence

An Interview with Dr. Charles J. DiComo, Senior Director, Laboratory Services, WellSpan Health

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Dr. Charles DiComo is an executive leader with a distinguished career in the health-care, life sciences, diagnostic, and global clinical trials industries. He has a proven track record of establishing built-for-purpose, state-of-the-art multidisciplinary clinical, pathology, and central labs, as well as hiring, training, and directing the start-up and commercial operations teams and creating stable, productive, harmonized, lean environments. He served as WellSpan Health Administrative Director, Laboratory Services; Integration and Planning; Eurofins Scientific Vice President and General Manager, U.S. Global Laboratory Operations; Aureon Biosciences' Chief Compliance Officer, Vice President of Operations, Lab Director, and Senior Scientist; a Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Research Fellow at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; and a Damon Runyon-Walter Winchell Postdoctoral Fellow at Columbia University. DiComo holds a BS degree in genetics, an MS degree in molecular and cellular biology, and a PhD in genetics.*



Dr. Charles J. DiComo

the Division of Molecular Pathology as a Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Special Fellow, where my teams and I focused on “benchtop to bedside” therapeutic approaches for our cancer patients during the early days of “personalized” medicine.

These successes led my colleagues and I at MSKCC, Yale Cancer Center, and Albert Einstein College of Medicine to co-found a precision medicine diagnostic company where we developed and commercialized prognostic laboratory developed

tests (LDTs) direct to physicians, permitting personalized treatment options for their newly diagnosed cancer patients. From there, I was recruited to Eurofins Scientific as Vice President and General Manager of U.S. and Global Central Laboratory Operations overseeing human clinical trials across our build-for-purpose, state-of-the-art laboratories on six continents.

This role required our family to relocate from New York State to Lancaster County in South Central Pennsylvania. It was at this time that I was introduced to WellSpan Health for my family’s healthcare needs. Little did I know a few years later an opportunity would arise that would bring me full circle and back into the healthcare arena. I joined this rapidly growing health system in a newly created role as Administrative Director for Laboratory Services; Integration and Planning.

**What excited you about the opportunity to join WellSpan and made you feel it was the right fit?**

The people, the mission, and the opportunity. I have been extremely fortunate to be able to leverage my diverse experiences in multiple disciplines and patient-focused sectors to impact vital changes in our healthcare delivery, not only for my family and friends, but for my neighbors and communities across South Central Pennsylvania and beyond.

**COMPANY BRIEF** *Every day across central Pennsylvania, the people of WellSpan Health (wellspan.org) work together to support its nonprofit mission of service – one patient, one community, one unique healthcare need at a time. WellSpan Health also collaborates with community leaders, area residents, and other healthcare providers to make sure that inpatient, outpatient, home health and physician services are located where they can do the most good.*

**Will you discuss your career journey in the healthcare industry?**

From an educational standpoint, I received my BS and MS degrees at Long Island University C.W. Post. After college, I began my graduate studies at Stony Brook University on Long Island, New York in partnership with Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories, obtaining my PhD in Genetics. I was then recruited to Columbia University in New York City and awarded a Damon Runyon-Walter Winchell Postdoctoral Fellowship, where I focused on oncology and the tumor suppressor protein p53. Following my time there, I was recruited to Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC), co-founding

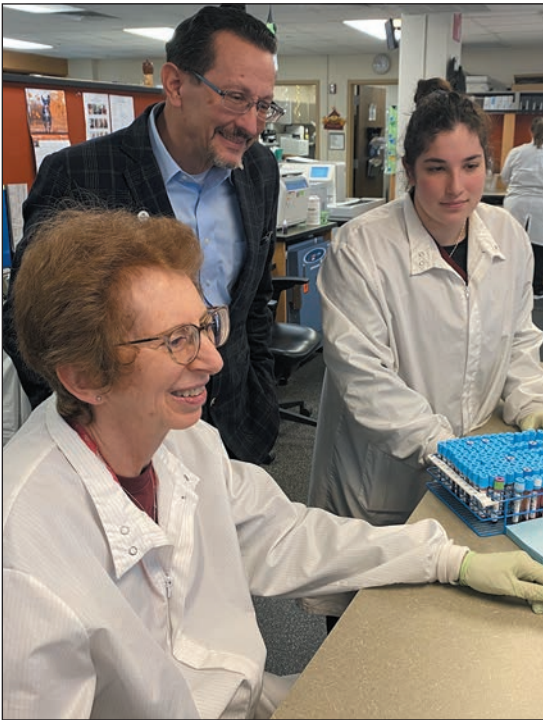


Charles DiComo working with WellSpan Health lab teams (above and following page)

**Will you highlight your role and areas of focus?**

My role as leader of WellSpan Laboratories is to ensure that we are forging a successful future for WellSpan Health by building a strong and successful laboratory service organization. This includes the development of a sound professional and administrative leadership structure, with comprehensive and uniform consultative support to all clinicians, and professional leadership support with evidence-based laboratory medicine, clinical effectiveness, and structured utilization review.

I continually evaluate a centralized laboratory services model, strengthening our centers of excellence and our outreach services structure and standardization opportunities. It is also crucial to evaluate interdisciplinary service opportunities, where laboratory is paired with imaging, pharmacy, occupational health, sleep services, rehab medicine, etc. These partnerships have proved effective.



Other key initiatives are the standardization and normalization of our Laboratory Services across the health system including, but not limited to, technology, equipment, methods, reference ranges, critical values, etc., along with our policies, procedures, manuals, regulatory standards, compliance, quality and safety metrics, operating budgets, capital equipment, cost containment efforts and, most importantly, consumer satisfaction initiatives. WellSpan has been intentional to prioritize this standardization across our system of care to ensure the quality of care, and the patient experience, is consistent.

Finally, as Chair of WellSpan Health Laboratory Operations, Governance, and Integration Committee (LOGIC), consisting of my team of Lab Directors, Medical Directors, Clinical Directors, Lab Operations Managers, Technical Directors, Contract Administrators, and the System Managers, we function as the decision-making unit, under the guiding principles of our charter, and serve as a recommending body



to the WellSpan hospitals, facilities, leadership, and medical staff on matters related to laboratory services.

**Will you provide an overview of WellSpan Health's Laboratory Services?**

WellSpan Laboratory Services is a network of eight hospital laboratories providing a comprehensive menu of clinical laboratory, molecular diagnostic, transfusion, anatomic pathology, and technical consultative services to WellSpan Health and the South Central Pennsylvania/Northern Maryland region. The laboratory performed over 10 million tests in FY22, supporting inpatient and emergency care, outpatient physician offices, skilled nursing and homebound care, and ambulatory patient care at 39 outpatient draw locations across the region. Our College of American Pathologist (CAP) system-accredited laboratory is supported by nearly 700 technical professionals and support staff, 25 pathologists, and 2 PhD technical directors.

The goal of WellSpan Laboratories is to be a leader in service excellence, test utilization management and interdisciplinary collaboration, rooted in STEEP (Safe, Timely, Effective, Equitable, Patient-centered Care) principles.

**How do you describe WellSpan's culture and values?**

At WellSpan, we have several values that guide our decision-making and culture:

- Respect for all
- Work as One
- Assume positive intent
- Do the right thing
- Find a better way

While they all have their place in a growing organization with a vision to reimagine healthcare, the "find a better way" value has been especially important for our team of 20,000 across the health system. Often, we turn to our frontline teams for input and feedback on the

best way forward. We recognize that ideas are often born out of those that are most engrained in the effort and we empower them to speak up and share their visions on how we can find a better way forward.

**What have been the keys to WellSpan's industry leadership?**

As old ways of thinking and doing became obsolete, our teams at WellSpan have been challenged to ask, "what if" and have been driven to reimagine the way we operate. Looking through a new lens, we disrupt ourselves to pave the way for a better value-based future – WellSpan's goal is to lead the region in value. We are providing greater value by focusing on innovation and partnerships. We are also committed to upholding our social and environmental responsibility to drive lasting change for our patients – and our planet – by implementing sustainable best practices.

**What are your priorities for WellSpan Health's Laboratory Services as you look to the future?**

Simply put, WellSpan Laboratory Services will continue to strive to provide our consumers with exceptional patient experience and timely and accurate laboratory testing. Through our Precision Medicine programs and The Gene Health Project, we will also aid in improving access to personalized healthcare and support new research discoveries for our community.

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

Be passionate, be persistent, be in a continuous learning mode, volunteer where you can, engage and deliver, surround yourself with diverse and dynamic peers and mentors, lean-in and do not fear taking an unconventional path. Focus on others and find solace in knowing you can and will have an impact on patients' well-being. ●