

CEO of North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System visits TJU

Do you ever wonder what it takes for a health system to win the National Quality Forum's (NQF) prestigious National Healthcare Quality Award? The 2010 award was given to North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System (NS-LIJ) for its ongoing commitment to providing high-quality, transparent, patient-centered healthcare. NS-LIJ has the distinction of being the first health system in the New York metropolitan area to receive this award.

Recently, the Jefferson School of Population Health (JSPH) hosted a presentation by Michael Dowling, President and CEO of NS-LIJ. Mr. Dowling spoke at length about his personal and professional journey, and how it influenced his mindset and set the stage for his commitment to creating a culture of quality at NS-LIJ. Over the course of his talk, he shared numerous insights, including his perspective regarding the essence of the quality movement – “quality is a value, it is in the DNA of an organization, and every employee is a quality professional.”

During his tenure as CEO, Mr. Dowling has promoted the quality agenda through radical changes to the structure and organization of the primary hospitals,

long-term care facilities, community hospitals, and ambulatory sites that comprise the NS-LIJ Health System. The health system owns each entity, and all primary administrative and clinical functions are centralized for maximum efficiency, communication, and integration. In addition, the health system has a single board of directors, enabling effective decision-making with a constant focus on the big picture. There were enormous challenges to produce the massive systems changes required to create NS-LIJ. Despite the fact that nearly every entity within the health system was operating at a deficit at the time of purchase – it is now profitable, generating over \$6 billion in revenue and employing 42,000 people.

One example of Dowling's paradigm-shifting approach to leadership is his attendance at NS-LIJ's Monday morning new staff orientation sessions. He makes it a point to personally meet every new hire – on average, about 70-90 people each week. He is also committed to the concepts of integration, teamwork and transparency, and has established protected time on Fridays for all administrative and clinical staff to attend patient safety rounds. Dowling is interested in the feedback and experiences of all personnel and views the collective partnership as key to service excellence.

Some of the significant themes in his presentation included:

- *Employee Development and Engagement*
- *Teamwork and Collaboration*
- *Commitment to Transparency*
- *Commitment to Innovation and Continuous Improvement Focus on Accountability*
- *The Big Picture – Manage for the Short Term, Lead for the Long Term*

Regarding health care reform, Dowling believes that most future revenue will come from government payers instead of commercial payers. He is concerned about the high expectations for success of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and its lack of emphasis on cost containment, and issues around caring for an aging population.

Dowling's approach to quality, organizational culture and leadership within the broader context of health care reform is to extend it beyond the framework of simply doing a job and regard it as a “responsibility and obligation.” ■