Greetings Health Care Management Students!

Heraclitus the Greek philosopher aptly indicated “The Only Thing that is Constant is Change”. Indeed we are witnessing significant change in healthcare on all fronts. Health care reforms including the Affordable Care Act, are changing ground rules on how care will be delivered in the future. Kotter, the management Guru suggests that certain triggers are required for change including a “burning platform” to create a sense of urgency. As a nation we have done this by acknowledging the unsustainable spending in health care. We also know that clinical and patient safety outcomes aren’t necessarily at par when compared to other developed nations.

The renewed focus on population health requires that health care organizations change their traditional ways of providing care. It requires executives in the C-suite to go back to the drawing board to determine the new value proposition for patients, payers, and purchasers of care. It requires healthcare organizations to understand workforce requirements for the future. Clearly, the curative model alone isn’t going to be enough! It is time that we focused on health and not just disease. The stage has been set and we all need to play our respective roles.

These thoughts and sentiments are echoed by senior executives in this issue. Clearly the shift from episodic care to outpatient care requires change to occur and several board room discussions to address the changing values of key stakeholders.

I encourage our graduates and students to think outside the box for strategies and solutions. Old routines and rituals may not get us to our goal of a health care system that provides high quality care to all at lower costs.

Dr. Engineer

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Dates to know!

March 13: HCMN Career Panel
March 15-22: Spring Break
May 13: Finals Begin
May 22: College of Health Professions Commencement
The HCMN internship during the final semester of study is an integral part of the HCMN program. Students often wonder what to expect from their internship placement and how to even prepare for the interviews that often precede an offer from a site. To gain insider perspective regarding the changing health care environment and insight into how prospective interns can prepare themselves for a career in HCMN, we spoke with Dennis W. Pullin, president of MedStar Harbor Hospital and senior vice president of MedStar Health.

**What kind of work do you do at MedStar?**

“As the president, I have a responsibility to make sure we remain an asset to the community by fulfilling our mission: providing quality and safe care to our patients”.

**What are your thoughts on the changing environment for health care management considering national and state health care reform?**

“Health care management is a complex business to begin with. I think when you look at health care reform, it adds to the complexity”. “What we have to do as health care managers is figure out how we help with this paradigm shift. We are going from an episodic system of care to one that is outpatient-driven and supports wellness. We have to change how we deliver the system”. “We have to learn how to operate with one foot in today’s environment and one foot in tomorrow’s. That is a huge challenge”.

**How do you think these changes will affect the job market for new HCMN professionals?**

“I think it’s going to open it up. It will provide additional opportunities. Until recently, most students focused on getting jobs in hospitals and physician’s practices”.

**What skill sets do you feel might become more useful in this market?**

“I think the number one skill set is to be resourceful. What you want is someone who is a critical thinker and someone who is resourceful. That is what I look for”. “You have to figure out a way to determine if they are very resourceful. You can look at some kind of job they have had and assess if they are a critical thinker. That is why the internship is so important. I have an entire semester to assess if they are a critical thinker. Can they handle projects? Do they ask good questions? These things allow people like myself to determine if I should take a calculated chance on them”.

**What pearls of wisdom can you share with students preparing for a career in HCMN?**

“You know, confidence is so important. The ability to communicate is extremely important - the ability to articulate a thought. There is value in expressing what you don’t know. For individuals like myself, evaluating a student coming out of school, we are looking for a student who is motivated, who can multitask. It’s great to see someone who worked part-time or did an internship and comes in with a working knowledge. Presentation is key as well”.

In addition to his roles as president of MedStar Harbor Hospital and senior vice president of Medstar Health, Mr. Pullin also has active leadership roles in the American College of Healthcare Executives, the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Health and Medical Research Foundation, Healthcare for the Homeless, the American Heart Association, and the American Hospital Association’s Governance Council for Metropolitan Hospitals. Additionally, Mr. Pullin graciously shares his expertise as an HCMN internship preceptor for Towson University.
An Interview with the Intern

Intern
Faluna Kernizan

Site of Internship
MedStar
Montgomery

What drew you to MedStar?
MedStar has demonstrated the ability to successfully expand during trying times in the healthcare field. I also wanted to have a foot in the door of one of the most recognized healthcare systems in the DMV.

What is a typical day like there?
Honestly, the only type of typical is spontaneity. Every day I am doing something different. This specific hospital does daily safety huddles which provide critical information about what’s going on in the hospital. Depending on what’s happening, it is the responsibility of each staff member to do their part in solving the issue or at least brainstorm on ways to implement a plan to solve it. As of now construction is taking place to open a new wing on the 4th and 5th floor where cardiology and women’s health will be held.

This is big because with this opening many opportunities and opening will be available.

How is it balancing a full-time internship and the HCMN projects?
It is actually quite simple, because they go hand in hand. What is actually difficult is balancing out the full-time internship and my personal life. The HCMN projects are simply written documentations of what is occurring and what we are learning at these sites. I actually enjoy the projects because it gives me the opportunity to be more strategic in how I do things so I am proud of what I report for the HCMN projects in the end.

What advice can you give to upcoming interns?
I would advise them to save as much money as they can and truly remember that this is a learning experience that we are in control of. It is up to us to take away as much information as possible from this opportunity so that we can use it in the future. Also, that most of the people at the sites want to hear suggestions and to be asked questions, that is the only way the preceptor and the students truly fully benefit from one another.

New Year, New Look!

As one of the faces of HCMN, we invite you to join us for a photo shoot!

Photos will be used for our website and advertisement materials.

Date and time to be announced!
Faculty Spotlight

“IT began by accident”. This is how the conversation began when I asked former senior executive, Toby Tighe, about his beginnings in healthcare management. How does one go from knowing nothing about healthcare management to becoming a seasoned expert in the field? I sat down with Toby to discuss his journey to top positions, such as Vice President, Executive Vice President, and Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

Toby was first introduced to the field of health care management while attending a Christmas cocktail party with his parents. With a surgeon for a father, Toby grew up with an intimate relationship with healthcare and was exposed to the dynamics of operating rooms and the general hospital environment from a young age. Reflecting upon these formative experiences, Toby noted: “I found it to be a fascinating, complex, “who’s on first?” kind of environment. How does one organize this place, so in fact, patients get better and actually go home?” It was at this cocktail party that Toby got the first glimpse at the answer to this question when he struck up a conversation with the Chief Executive of Lowell General Hospital. Prior to this, “I didn't know this field existed. I was a psychology major in college. I had this interest in organizational dynamics. Once I found out that there was this kind of role in planning, organizing, managing, and evaluating how a place worked, I started to explore well, how do you get into this? How do you get access to this?”

At the time, there was no such thing as an undergraduate degree in the field, so Toby began looking for masters programs. He found the right fit at Columbia University, which offered a Masters in Hospital Administration. After one year of coursework, Toby spent the majority of his second year of graduate school at Boston University Medical Center, where he received hands-on experience in administration. While Toby had developed an understanding of hospital operations, his interests in other aspects of health care management remained. “I had an interest in hospital operations- but I really had an interest in this whole decision-making process about strategic direction. How do we decide what’s optimal for the organization? How do we make decisions with the board and senior management? How do we get the resources? How do we put them and place and how do we execute?” In efforts to discover the answers to these questions and gain exposure to decision-making strategies and operations, Toby enrolled in the Masters of Public Health program at Johns Hopkins University. From this experience emerged additional opportunities to become part of health care management on a larger scale. His career has included experience in a variety of medical centers, holding positions such as Assistant Director for Professional Services, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Executive Vice President, and Vice President for prestigious organizations, including Central Maine Medical Center, GBMC Healthcare, Inc. and Greater Baltimore Medical Center, Mercy Health Services, Inc., and Mercy Medical Center. When asked about the rewards and challenges of his career, Toby reflected for a moment as the words and memories came to him. “There’s no question that the most rewarding for me always was taking something that was not as yet even conceptualized and working that through till it was not only a concept, but it was a thing and it was a thing that accomplished the result that you wanted to accomplish- and you could prove it”. “The challenge is understanding what management is. And management, in my view, is getting things done through other people. A manager’s job, particularly at higher levels of organization, is organizing and instilling a set of beliefs and values and instilling a sense of “let’s get this done, and providing the resources to get it done”.

Soon after his retirement in 2007, Toby was invited to speak to a class at Towson University and began serving as an internship supervisor to healthcare management students. “The chairman of the department at Columbia University felt incredibly strongly that one’s obligation throughout one’s professional care is to continue to learn and mentor those who are coming behind you. I have been devoted to that notion of continuous learning and mentorship, ever since”.

When asked for a final pearl of wisdom for students and recent graduates in our healthcare management program, Toby replied with the following: “While I think that the students are better prepared and are clearer about why they got into the field, what I would like to see more of is the aspiration”. “It’s not wisdom- it’s what I would like to see more of from these students. Perhaps, it’s an unrealistic expectation for students at this level of their academic preparation but I would love to be able to see more of them have an aspiration for that, as opposed to not having a clear idea of the endpoint. I wish that as faculty, we could instill a greater sense of aspiration for our students- increase the angle rather than having the angle be lower- make the angle higher. Maybe that means exposure. We need to expose them more to these kinds of positions. If I were king of the world, that’s what I would like to see- more fire in the belly in terms of aspiration”. To prepare themselves for one of the many excellent internships offered through our program, students should “do their homework and be clearer about their options, what appeals to them, and what settings they see themselves in”.

When Toby is not sharing his knowledge and expertise with students at Towson, he can be found mountain biking and traveling with his family and friends. Toby can be contacted through his Towson University email (ttighe@towson.edu).

Contact Us!

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