



Physician
Briefing
Series

Physician Leadership

Driving Medical Group Success

Physicians have a strong voice
in decision making and
advancing Medical Group goals



 **NorthShore**
University HealthSystem

Medical Group

Physician Briefing Series | Physician Leadership Driving Medical Group Success

Dear Colleague,

The healthcare environment today is difficult and complex. With costly requirements for technology, growing competition, regulatory changes, and increasing demands for “value” and “quality,” the pressure on physicians has never been greater.

Now more than ever, the strength, security and stability offered by a large professional medical group is an attractive option. Yet many physicians are reluctant to join, citing concerns about their hard-earned autonomy and perceived lack of control over their practice.

But joining a medical group doesn't have to mean handing over patient care and clinical decision-making to others. Strong, broad physician leadership has been integral to our growth and success.

Our destiny is very much in our own hands—which translates into better patient care, personal benefits related to compensation and quality of life, and a meaningful role in the direction of both the organization and one's individual practice.

I invite you to read further and learn more about what makes NorthShore Medical Group a better place to practice.

Joseph Golbus, MD

President, NorthShore University HealthSystem Medical Group

Physician-led Practices

“In better-performing practices, physicians are strongly committed to the success of the group as a whole. The key is robust physician leadership at every level ... the lesson is to put physicians in the driver’s seat. This means creating a physician-dominated board and providing doctors with a variety of leadership opportunities.”

*Jeff Peters
President/CEO, Surgical Directions, LLC*

A Call for Physician Leadership

At NorthShore Medical Group, our vision of physician leadership is thoroughly embedded in our culture and inextricably linked to how we do business on a daily basis. Here are just a few of the notable ways in which we bring that vision to life for the ultimate benefit of our physicians and patients.

Physicians at the Helm

For more than a decade, NorthShore Medical Group has had a practicing physician as President, and a Board of Directors that’s more than 95 percent composed of physicians. At NorthShore, our Medical Group is the engine of growth for our four-hospital system. Working in partnership with our hospital colleagues, we’re able to advance shared goals and support decision-making that creates what we believe is the best place for physicians to practice medicine. Our member physicians enjoy the security that comes with being part of an established, nationally ranked health system and the benefits of a physician-focused multispecialty group practice. It’s this combination of unique, tangible benefits that has contributed to both our exponential growth in membership (from roughly 250 physicians 15 years ago to nearly 1,000 today, and growing) and our best-in-class physician retention rate.

Local Physician Leaders

Each of our physician leaders is a practicing physician. These physicians all have a clear job description with defined responsibilities and authority, measurable goals, and compensation for their time.

In each of our Primary Care Practices, there’s a designated “PCP Lead” who oversees that practice. The PCP Leads meet monthly as a group to develop standards and review progress in providing better access and service to our patients. Since they’re “on the ground” in PCP offices every day, they have a rich understanding of the issues that are most important to our physician members. The policies and standards they help enact are realistic and driven by the members themselves. The PCP Leads also maintain standards in their own offices, providing a direct and “local” channel for decision-making. For specialists, Division Heads are responsible for the clinical, operational and financial oversight of their group. Division Heads are also practicing specialists who are aware of the issues that are most important to their division.

Physician-Led Committees Advance Medical Group Goals

Committees Play Vital Role

A key mechanism for giving our physicians a strong voice in the Medical Group is our system of physician-led committees. The committees represent a broad cross section of the membership, with roughly 15 percent of our physicians serving on one committee or another.

Far more than simply filling a “rubber stamp” function, our committees are appointed by the Board of Directors and have clearly defined responsibility for determining and implementing annual goals in areas vital to our collective and individual success. These include Physician Engagement, Patient Engagement, NorthShoreConnect Physician Leadership, Specialty Care Practice Network, Primary Care Practice Network, Epic Optimization, and numerous quality and patient safety committees. Here are just two of their stories.

Primary Care Practice Network (PCPN)

In just a few years, our Primary Care Physicians moved from the industry standard of seeing patients from 9 to 5 on weekdays to a system of extended hours on multiple days each week—plus Saturday and even Sunday hours in each geography we serve. The changes were driven by our PCPN Committee, which reviewed our ongoing patient loyalty survey research and identified the need for improved access to urgent and routine appointments. The committee also oversaw the collection and communication of hard data that demonstrated favorable patient feedback and improved physician compensation. Recently, PCPN leadership has developed the “Dinner at Home” program, which aims to assess the efficiency of the individual physician workflows with a specific focus on administrative workflows supporting patient care. Following the assessment, physician coaches provide enhancements so physicians spend less time on administrative activities and more time at home.

Specialty Care Practice Network (SCPN)

The Specialty Care Practice Network represents all medical and surgical specialists. This group is led by Ervin “Woody” Denham III, MD, FACS, who serves as Vice President and Director of the SCPN. The SCPN is responsible for the operational aspects of each specialist’s practice. Here, division directors and clinical leaders of the specialties have a voice in how their practices operate. In addition, this group helps determine what areas of specialty care require more focus and how Medical Group initiatives are disseminated throughout the specialty practices. Initiatives in the SCPN have led to improved communication through our patient portal, NorthShoreConnect, and improved patient loyalty.

Balancing Autonomy and Support

For us, it’s about engaging all our physicians. It’s about empowering local leaders in all our specialties and in each primary care practice. And it’s about giving them a say in how we operate and a role in making the decisions that affect their future.

That means everything from the hours we practice to the standards by which our performance is measured. So while many medical groups still tend toward centralized control, we’re focused on engaging physician leaders at all levels, in collaboration with administrative partners, to steward our shared destiny. Our physicians enjoy a sense of independence and control over both their day-to-day practice and their long-term future, while also benefiting from the support and infrastructure of a large group.

“It’s a balance,” said Dr. Golbus, NorthShore Medical Group President. “Certainly, we have protocols and standards to maintain consistency across the organization. So while certain things—how the phones are handled or how the waiting room looks—are standardized, we expect and encourage our physicians to take the lead role in what matters most: caring for our patients.”

Leadership Profiles

Steven Meyers, MD

Making our EHR Work for Physicians

Prior to joining NorthShore, Dr. Steven Meyers was in private practice at a hospital that was still using paper charts. However, Dr. Meyers had always been interested in computers and was one of the physician members of the committee investigating purchasing an Electronic Health Record (EHR) system for the hospital. “We traveled all over the country visiting hospitals using a variety of EHRs, so I became familiar with most of the major vendors.”

“The day I joined NorthShore, I transitioned from a fully paper world to a fully electronic one and would never dream of going back. Despite my early enthusiasm, it became clear to me that there were things about Epic that could be improved. I quickly became involved with the Epic Optimization Committee and Physician Advisory Council and became one of the ‘go to’ doctors in my department for Epic questions.”

His enthusiasm for driving improvement and demonstrated leadership ability earned Dr. Meyers a position in charge of the Epic Optimization Committee. Composed of more than a dozen physicians from a wide range of specialties, along with information services staff and administrators, the committee takes ideas from the physicians for new features and improvements and works to make them happen.

“Our job is to be the liaison between IT and the medical staff. Many great ideas come to the committee from a variety of sources, but it’s critical to make sure doctors have a strong voice in any changes contemplated to make sure they make clinical sense. We’re also the place physicians can send their ideas for new features or ask questions about Epic.”

Dr. Meyers sees incredible potential for the EHR system to improve how doctors care for patients by providing necessary information to clinicians when they need it and by improving efficiency so doctors can spend more time caring for patients and less time fulfilling regulatory requirements.

“I like having a voice in the process and being able to make changes that directly address the needs of our physicians and patients.”

—Joshua Herz, MD



Nancy Schindler, MD, MHPE

Taking Action on the Feedback of Member Physicians

Nancy Schindler is Vice President of Physician Development and Chairman of the Patient Engagement Committee. She’s been a member of NorthShore Medical Group for 18 years and serves as Vice Chairman of Education for the Department of Surgery and the E. Stephen Kurtides, MD, Chair of Medical Education.

As Vice President of Physician Development, Dr. Schindler partners with our Talent Development Office to design and help facilitate our Medical Group Leadership Institute (MGLI). Under the premise that “every physician is a leader,” the Medical Group seeks to offer leadership opportunities and leadership skill development to every member. Training takes the form of quarterly leadership forums open to all and a three-year “core curriculum” available to titled leaders (and a small number of additional members through application). Leadership development planning, coaching and mentorship are core parts of MGLI.

The Patient Engagement Committee (PENG) is tasked with engaging our patients in their own care as well as our system of care. PENG partners with Corporate Loyalty and has worked to create yearly practice activities to encourage NorthShore ALWAYS behaviors and engage the entire team in our goal of optimizing the patient experience. Our focus is on something everyone in healthcare should value—helping to ensure that our patients feel cared for and cared about, consistently across our system. Bringing physicians and staff together to talk about these goals has been a powerful experience. Additional projects include development of doctor-level dashboards to follow patient feedback, simulation training and practice consults to improve the patient experience, and creation of a “toolbox” to support physician and team improvements.

“We’ve come to realize that every care team member—from first touch to last—has the opportunity to alleviate patient suffering—not only in the sense of physical pain, but also worry, fear, frustration and anxiety. We want our patients to feel that they’re safe, cared for and cared about everywhere they go at NorthShore—to feel that they’re truly at the best place to receive care. Every person on the care team is important to achieving this,” Dr. Schindler said. “Patient Engagement starts with Care team member engagement.” PENG works to engage our teams in providing the best experience possible.

“ It’s great to have the people who are there on the front lines with us, fighting our battles every day, representing our interests.”

– *Laura Bianchi, MD*



Reaping the Benefits of Physician Leadership

Every physician at NorthShore Medical Group has an opportunity to lead, whether on a committee, in a formal leadership role, or via the many channels we offer for contributing insights and feedback. This culture of leadership has allowed us to develop a multispecialty group practice that continues to attract and retain top-tier physicians. It allows us to harness the energy and talents of all our physicians for the good of our patients.

It allows us to successfully address the many external challenges impacting healthcare today with sensible solutions. And it affords our member physicians the opportunity to provide meaningful input on the issues that affect them the most.

We believe being physician-led is one of the reasons NorthShore Medical Group is a better place to practice.



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