

Physician Briefing Series | **Physician Leadership**  
**Driving Medical Group Success**

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



# 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.”*

*Jeffry Peters  
President/CEO, Health Directions, LLC  
Healthcare Strategy Alert, 2007*

### 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 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% composed of physicians. At NorthShore our medical group is the engine of growth for our 4-hospital system. Working in partnership with our hospital colleagues, we are 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, with the benefits of a physician-focused multi-specialty group practice. It is this combination of unique, tangible benefits that has contributed to both our exponential growth in membership (from roughly 250 physicians a decade ago to roughly 700 today, and growing) and our best-in-class physician retention rate.

### Local Physician Leaders

Each of our physician leaders are practicing physicians. 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 is 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 are “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.

In the specialties, each division has a Division Head. Their responsibilities include clinical, operational and financial oversight of their specialty group.

# 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% 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 retention, practice growth, quality, EMR optimization, risk prevention and patient safety. In addition, both the primary and specialty care physicians have their own committees to lead improvement and growth initiatives. Here are just two of their success stories.

## Primary Care Leadership

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 PCP Lead 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.

## Specialty Leadership

Our Specialty Leadership Committee implemented changes in our EMR systems to allow referring physicians to request urgent specialty

appointments for their patients with a “click” through our EMR, rather than the time-consuming process of having to call a specific specialist personally. They also directed the redesign of workflows so that office staffs proactively call patients who have not scheduled their urgent specialty appointments, greatly improving patient compliance with treatment plans while advancing patient loyalty. Additionally, they lead the charge in creating a single phone number for each specialty to expedite communication for staff and physicians alike.

## 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 are 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,” says Dr. Golbus. “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

### Mark Lampert, MD

#### Making our EMR Work for Physicians

When electronic medical records were just being introduced, Dr. Mark Lampert was working in a small hospital in a community of 50,000 people. His arrival at NorthShore Medical Group, with its high-end, fully functional EPIC EMR system, was a revelation, to say the least.

“It was like a car. I knew where the brakes and the steering wheel were, but I didn’t really know how to drive it,” he says. As he learned and became more familiar with the system, he started asking questions. “I felt like we could get a lot more out of EPIC.”

His enthusiasm for driving improvement and demonstrated leadership ability earned Dr. Lampert 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.

“Sometimes it’s just a matter of education. They may ask for a feature that they weren’t aware is already built into the system,” he says. “Others have really great ideas for new functions that we end up recommending to the system’s designers.”

Dr. Lampert sees tremendous potential for getting more and more out of the EPIC system, using it to mine for data, track and measure performance and otherwise make physicians’ lives easier. “The whole point is to create an EMR system that works for us, instead of the other way around,” he says.

“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*

### Ervin “Woody” Denham, MD

#### Taking Action on the Feedback of Member Physicians

Dr. Ervin “Woody” Denham was named Chairman of Group Practice Committee after providing valued participation as a member for several years. Under his leadership, the committee takes on a variety of initiatives designed to improve the loyalty of member physicians, patients, referring physicians and our staff.

For example, the committee oversaw the transition of patient loyalty research from an internal tool to a nationally benchmarked system that provides normative comparisons and expedites patient feedback to the care team to support ongoing improvement. They also provided leadership in advancing the use of our EMR to expedite test results to patients through a secure link from their home computer. And, in response to a survey of member physicians, the committee developed a robust annual recognition program to nominate, select and honor the unique contributions of Medical Group physicians for Distinguished Service to Patients, Contributions in Medicine and as Outstanding Academician.

“It’s a very powerful thing for the members to know that decisions are being made not only with their input but by their peers,” Dr. Denham says. “So the solutions we present are relevant and practical. We’re all living and practicing under the same standards.”



“ 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 multi-specialty 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 for which they are most affected.

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



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