

## **The Physician Executive of the Future**

***by Gordon Hawthorne, JD, President and Healthcare Practice Leader  
and Sara Connolly, Managing Director***

Physicians have a long-standing tradition of leadership. Indeed, from the Mayo brothers to C. Everett Koop and Don Berwick, physicians have helped shape the healthcare system. Moreover, physicians have long been viewed as pillars of their communities and as leaders in their institutions. Far more recent, however, is the emergence of the physician as a working executive.

The increasing challenges of healthcare reform present a need for leaders who possess passion for high-quality patient care, contemporary clinical knowledge, and a pragmatic approach to the realities of healthcare economics. Not surprisingly, such leaders are in exceptionally high demand.

The role of the physician executive is no longer the archetypal VPMA of yesteryear. Indeed, today's physician executives are expected to be full and active participants in diverse areas such as care redesign, quality and safety, physician alignment, process improvement, clinical program development, physician leadership development, and medical staff governance. Moreover, as the boundaries among physician organizations, hospitals, and payors begin to blur, the ability to traverse the divide between inpatient and ambulatory care is a critical, yet emerging, skill set.

For many physicians considering executive roles, such positions provide an opportunity to influence care across a community of patients. Moreover, in recognition of the changing nature of leadership roles, physicians are increasingly considering transitions into executive roles at an earlier stage in their careers, gaining formal training in medical and business management, and actively seeking experiences that will provide them with exposure to both operational challenges and strategic imperatives.

As such, the physician executive of the future is likely to possess both clinical knowledge and business acumen, together with the ability to look beyond old paradigms of care delivery and physician alignment. These new executives will be required to address issues of access, quality, safety, cost, efficiency, and service within the context of a dynamic environment in which physicians' relationships with providers and payors are constantly evolving.

The role of the physician leader is at a turning point. As such, organizations have an opportunity to redefine clinical leadership roles to make physicians true partners in the development, implementation, and success of new care paradigms. Similarly, opportunities exist for physicians to assume new and emerging executive leadership roles and help shape the future direction of healthcare delivery.

In short, the challenges have never been greater, but likewise, the opportunities have never been greater.

Diversified Search has an extensive track record of engaging and recruiting senior physician executives in integrated delivery systems, hospitals, and physician organizations. Our team includes search professionals with backgrounds in the provider, payor, and consulting environments. With that depth and diversity of experience, we are leading the movement to redesign executive search services tailored to the burgeoning demand for physician executives.

Through our integrated Executive Search and Senior Advisory process, we endeavor to pose the important questions; broaden perspectives on emerging structures, roles, and competencies; and fully support our clients in recruiting the physician executives who are up to the challenges and opportunities of the new healthcare environment.

Recent physician executive placements include:

**Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer** – seven-hospital health system with facilities throughout the state of New Jersey

**President** – 220-physician, multi-specialty group practice in Richmond, VA

**Seven Vice Presidents, Medical Affairs** – various locations within a \$2.7 billion multi-state health system headquartered in Maryland

**Corporate Vice President, Quality and Patient Safety Center** – \$2.5 billion multi-state not-for-profit health system headquartered in St. Louis, MO

**Chief Medical Officer** – 450-bed not-for-profit community hospital in Tucson, AZ

**President** – large, multi-specialty group practice in Oklahoma City, OK

**System President and Chief Executive Officer** – three-hospital, \$1 billion health system in Nashville, TN

For more information on Diversified Search, as well as our integrated executive search and advisory process, please contact: **Gordon W. Hawthorne** at **215-656-3556** or [Gordon.hawthorne@divsearch.com](mailto:Gordon.hawthorne@divsearch.com).