

VIEWPOINT

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When Tina Freese Decker was growing up in Des Moines, Iowa, chatting about the weather was serious business. Her meteorologist father had cofounded a radio weather service in 1973 called Freese-Notis Weather that continues to thrive today; she is now weathering the storms of change in healthcare as the president and CEO of Spectrum Health. Tina Freese Decker took the top job at the Grand Rapids, Mich.-based 15-hospital system on September 1, 2018 after serving 16 years at Spectrum Health in a variety of positions including executive vice president and chief operating officer. A young up-and-coming executive nationally—she was recognized by the American College of Healthcare Executives with the Robert S. Hudgens Memorial Award for Young Healthcare Executive of the Year 2013—Tina Freese Decker is also known for her collegial style and emphasis on innovation, which she traces to a stable yet entrepreneurial family background. “My dad had to reinvent his business because there were no meteorologist jobs when he graduated,” she says. “His perseverance in being innovative—in trying when you’re told no—has had a lasting impact on my leadership approach.”

Tina earned a Bachelor of Science in finance from Iowa State University, and graduated with a Master of Health Administration and Master of Industrial Engineering from University of Iowa. Tina’s husband has a Master’s degree in elementary education. Instead of teaching right now, he is focused on their two children—a daughter, age 10, and son, age 8. Tina’s hobbies include spending time with her family, reading and traveling.

What prepared you most for your current role?

It’s difficult to identify one factor, but it really starts with the values I was given growing up, in education and professional life. I’ve always been curious and asked a lot of questions, which helped me take advantage of the early opportunity to be a Spectrum Health administrative fellow with access to senior leadership and observe key strategic and operational decisions. My industrial engineering degree gave me both a global and operational perspective. As COO I learned how to blend strategy with operations while developing my people skills. I’m also grateful to have had many mentors both inside and outside the organization. Taking on new positions reinforced the value of continuous learning, to think differently and embrace collaboration.



TINA FREESE DECKER
PRESIDENT & CEO
SPECTRUM HEALTH

What are you focusing on in your first year as President & CEO?

I want to build a culture of trust and transparency, to be inclusive and collaborative with staff, physicians and the community. I’ve always made rounds at the hospitals and physician practices. Just last week I passed out apples at our health plan and people took selfies with me. We’re in such a serious business, we need to find opportunities to experience the lighter side.

It’s also really important to build a culture that cultivates talent. New roles are emerging every day. Healthcare is

a team sport and at the heart of it are people caring for people.

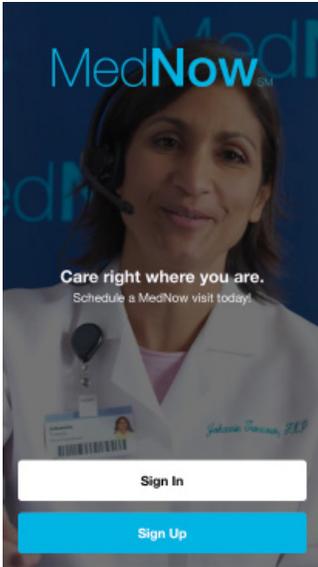
A third area of emphasis is to ensure our culture continues to foster innovation and growth. That means undergoing a transformation focusing on consumers and personalized medicine. It’s an opportunity to think innovatively.



Our current vision—to be the national leader for health by 2020—has an end date that is just around the corner. Therefore, we have an opportunity to create a new vision for the next 10 years around the theme of personalized health, which integrates precision medicine with a focus on personalized experience.

What type of innovation are you focused on at Spectrum Health? How will this contribute to the health system's growth?

Innovation can be big and small. We started Spectrum Health Ventures to broaden our focus, diversify revenue and help us think about new opportunities. We are working to create new solutions focused on health and wellness, creating partnerships to drive transformative change. While growth can be geographic, growth can also occur in terms of products and services for new populations. Spectrum Health's MedNow telemedicine, for example, is a new digital-health service that can increase access and convenience for patients while bolstering our brand via virtual care.



How do you value the contributions of each of Spectrum Health's components—health plan (Priority Health), hospitals, medical group, community health—to the bottom line, when for most health systems these components are financially at odds with each other?

Our strength and differentiation is in being an integrated health system. We've aligned our health plan, hospitals and physicians group around the communities we serve. It fits our mission. Our health plan emphasizes keeping people healthy and efficiently using resources; our providers focus on standardized, quality care and making care accessible. Our community partnerships focus on affordability and the social determinants of health. Payment systems are still challenging, but Spectrum Health is now at the point where half our revenue comes from the health plan and half from the provider side. Many health systems see the need to have a health plan, however, taking risk is a different business. You have to be all in and guided by rigorous analytics. Dabbling is not possible. While some health systems partner successfully with plans, having your own health plan has its advantages. For example, we can implement strategies to move toward a value-based model in a risk-free manner.

How are you addressing the social determinants of health?

Spectrum Health is very focused on health disparities and the social determinants of health. Our Healthier Communities' programs have created community partnerships for wellness and health equity to address these issues. Collaboratively, we have been able to impact disparities in birth outcomes and infant mortality. We have improved educational outcomes and health status among poverty-stricken neighborhoods by directly supporting curriculum and connecting our nurses with schools. We are diligently working to help provide safe, affordable housing and address food insecurity. These are areas where we will have continued focus. Additionally, Invest Health and Healthier Communities' Innovations have created a new way to fund strategies to improve the health of cities by utilizing social impact bonds and leveraging community sources. Through these efforts, we have achieved sustainable funding and provided a return on investment. Overall, our community health model is based on community partnerships since addressing health disparities and creating equitable health outcomes for all are far beyond what we can achieve as a singular organization.

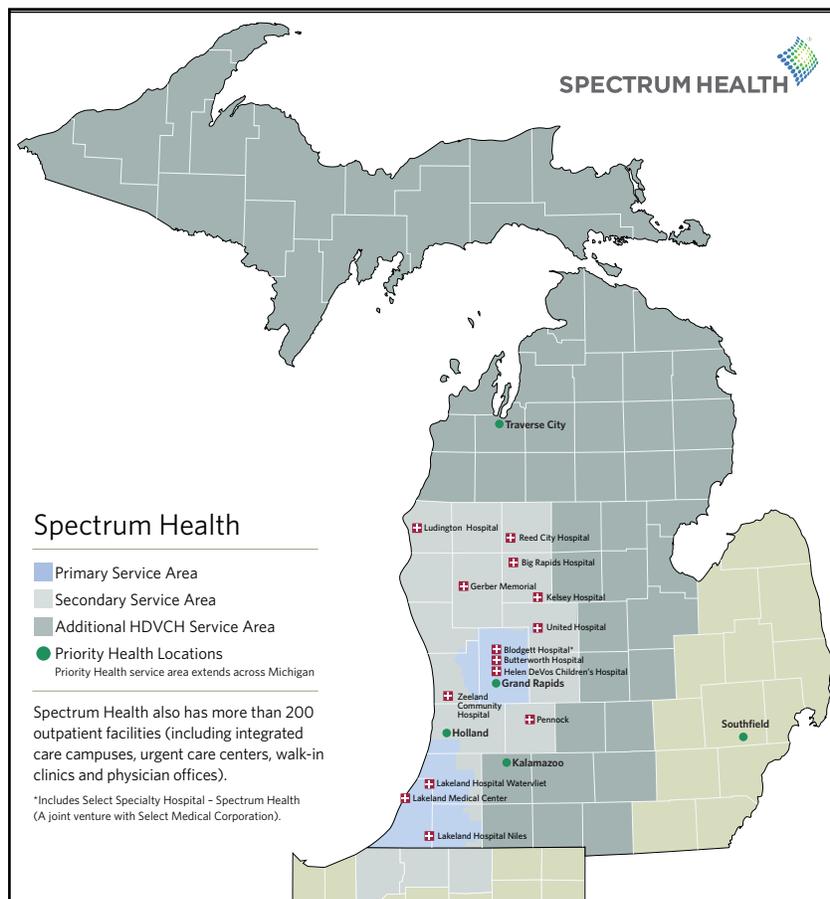


What specific challenges are you facing in your market in West Michigan/Michigan?

Our challenges aren't unique to our location. Healthcare leaders across the country are focused on similar priorities: reduce the total cost of care; make care affordable and accessible; eliminate health disparities. One area I want to focus on is how do we find more joy at work? We use the term provider and caregiver "fulfillment" rather than the negative "burnout." How are people engaged? How do we keep team members safe? These aspects of work life are vital to our physicians and employees and directly correlate to the quality, safety and patient experience we deliver to our communities. I love the challenge.

What role will personalized health/personalized medicine play in the healthcare landscape going forward?

Personalized health—not care—is the future. I define personalized health as the combination of precision medicine, personalized experience, and health and wellness. Precision medicine is targeted therapies and treatments that will be most effective for an individual when treating diseases like cancer. The personalized experience piece relates to having a consumer focus and meeting people wherever they are on their



health journey—making it easy and convenient for them to engage and stay healthy. We also need to be proactive about health and wellness instead of being reactive. Health and wellness needs to become a focus alongside our emphasis on healing.

What is your definition of “population health” and what is your highest priority in this area?

The focus of population health is on improving health outcomes for our communities—that’s the bottom line. We have a responsibility to improve health outcomes and value for the populations we serve while at the same time providing a personal and individualized approach to delivering this care. Our priorities related to population health are: 1. To ensure that our 30,000 employees and their dependents are healthy and receive the care necessary to maintain their health status. 2. To help our at-risk populations achieve excellent health outcomes. This includes patients in our successful high-risk pregnancy programs and the people we reach through our community-based health improvement efforts. 3. To provide a high-quality post-acute network of services that make it possible for

patients to get back to their homes and families, and provide the necessary support for recovery and ongoing health maintenance. 4. To treat patients effectively before leaving the hospital and plan ongoing support after discharge so that avoidable readmissions can be reduced for medical and surgical conditions.

How will partnerships contribute to Spectrum Health’s success in the future?

I believe in win-win solutions. Helen Keller said, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” By coming together we can make healthcare so much better. Today is not about what you own; it’s how you collectively work together for the community’s health and well-being. For example, nobody owns behavioral health, all of the players—services, solution, access—share in behavioral-health solutions. The same is true for the opioid epidemic. We have to be willing to work with others.

~ Chuck Appleby
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