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Executive Profile

Dr. Jaff prescribes dose of innovation for Newton-Wellesley Hospital

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Dr. Michael Jaff

Title: President, Newton-Wellesley Hospital

Age: 59

Education: Bachelor's degree, biology and music, Dickinson College, 1980; DO, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, 1985

Residence: Newton

Professional Challenge: "The uncertainty surrounding health care policy at all levels is deeply concerning given the potential impact on our organization. I am supporting NWH employees to innovate our approach to delivering health care so that we can provide the highest quality care and greatest experience to our patients and their families."

Dr. Michael Jaff knew he wanted to be a doctor since he was 8, when he underwent a barrage of medical tests for what was feared might be a serious heart problem requiring surgery.

"I remember being blown away by all the doctors and nurses and the whole process," recalled Jaff, a native of New York. "The process struck me as very cool. I decided right then and there that I wanted to go into medicine and said to my parents, 'That's what I want to do.' "



W. MARC BERNSAU

Michael R. Jaff, president of Newton-Wellesley Hospital.

Half a century later, Jaff, who never needed that surgery as a youth, is indeed a doctor, a renowned doctor, in fact, in the field of vascular medicine, and author of numerous books and articles, including a recent piece in the New England Journal of Medicine on blood clots. But he's probably best known today as president of Newton-Wellesley Hospital.

Taking command of Newton-Wellesley in October 2016, Jaff has a lot of work cut out for him, with community hospitals here and elsewhere across the country struggling to figure out where they fit into the sprawling U.S. health care system – and how they can attract patients and remain financially stable at a time of near constant changes within the medical world.

In the Boston area, the challenge for community hospitals is made more difficult by the fact that so many patients want to be treated at one of the major teaching hospitals in the city, not at a community hospital, and Jaff says one of his top priorities is to dispel the notion that sophisticated and comprehensive care can only be obtained in Boston.

"It's a bit of a challenge," he said of overcoming biases against community hospitals.

"Convincing people that they don't have to drive into Boston for quality care can be hard."

But he's not just trying to convince people with words, though under Jaff the 330-bed hospital has indeed launched a major media campaign, via newspaper, TV and radio ads, to get the word out about Newton-Wellesley Hospital. Jaff has also expanded services at Newton-Wellesley, hiring 11 new primary care physicians and five surgeons since taking over as president at the 3,300-employee hospital.

He's also trying to change the culture and mind-set at Newton-Wellesley, emphasizing the need for constant improvement and innovation in how every-day services are delivered. He's established a new ongoing innovation task force charged with tackling any matter, whether it's how doctor appointments are made to parking lot issues at the hospital.

He's also appointed the chief medical officer as "chief innovation officer" and created a new "chief quality and experience officer," in an attempt to link the quality of care to a hopefully pleasant experience for patients and their families.

In recent years, Newton-Wellesley's net patient service revenue has modestly increased, from \$393 million in fiscal 2013 to \$422.9 million in 2015, dipping a bit to \$420 million in 2016, largely before Jaff took command in October 2016, according to data compiled for the Boston Business Journal's Book of Lists.

In Jaff's relatively short time at Newton-Wellesley, his bosses at Partners HealthCare are impressed with the changes he's made.

"On a daily basis, Michael brings to his role exceptional energy, knowledge and empathy for patients and caregivers," said David Torchiana, chief executive of Partners, the giant health care

network that includes Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham & Women's Hospital, in addition to Newton-Wellesley. "His first year in the job has been nothing short of spectacular."

Keep in mind: Jaff — who has worked over the years in Cleveland; Milwaukee; Washington, D.C.; and New York, before being recruited by MGH to conduct his cutting-edge vascular research in Boston — still sees patients once a week and manages to get his work published, such as the piece on blood clots that appeared in NEJM in December.

"I still love it today as much as I did when I first started" in vascular medicine, said Jaff, who has taught at Harvard Medical School and who also went through Harvard Business School's general management program.

When not working, Jaff, who is married with two adult children, says he likes playing golf, bike riding and photography.

But work is never far from mind. "It's my passion," he said. "I'm hopeful we'll continue to improve."