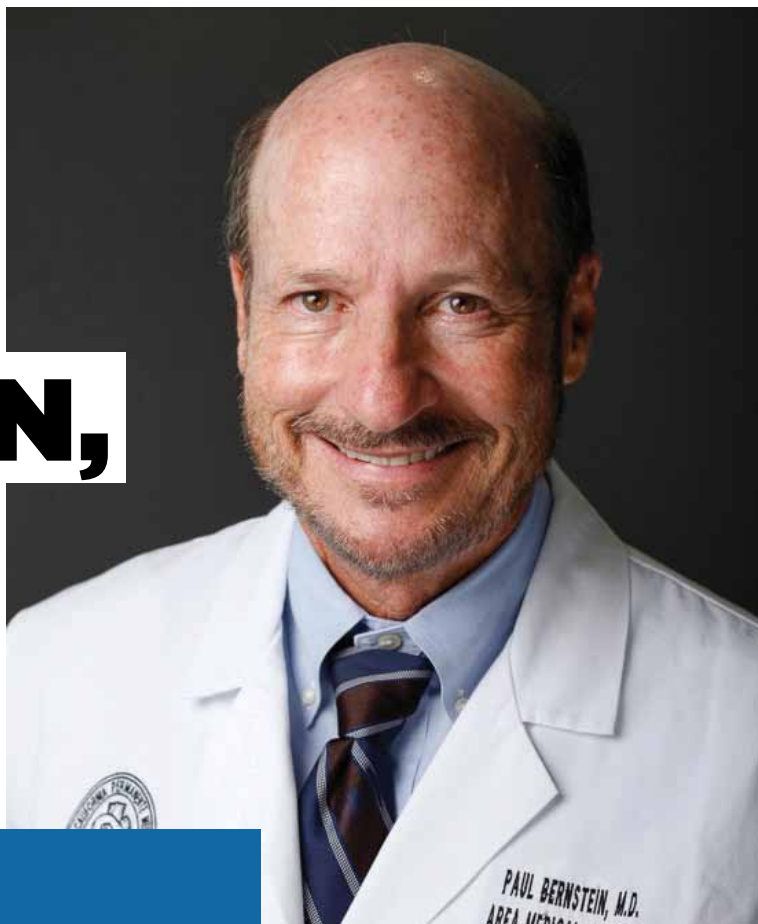


PAUL E. BERNSTEIN, MD, FACS

Medical Director and Chief of Staff, Kaiser Permanente **by Sherry Nooravi, PsyD**



Dear *San Diego Physician* Readers,

Great leadership and shaping a strong workplace culture are critical to the success of any organization, along with being a role model, “walking the talk,” and seeking to learn from the best practices of others. With that in mind, I’d like to introduce this yearlong leadership series to help you get to know a few of your fellow San Diego County physicians who’ve developed reputations for great leadership.

The interviews were conducted by Dr. Sherry Nooravi, an organizational psychologist who not only helps leaders shape motivating workplace cultures, but also studies what leaders of local high-performing organizations are doing right. Her research and insights have been published in the *San Diego Business Journal* and *The Huffington Post*, and she was recently recognized as “Trailblazer of the Year” by the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO, San Diego).

As you read each interview, consider Dr. Nooravi’s three questions at the end — the “Points to Consider” — and how you can apply the leader’s best practices and advice to strengthen your practice culture. I look forward to learning about these leaders and the best practices of driving an engaging culture with each of you.

Paul Hegyi, CEO, SDCMS

DR. BERNSTEIN, 22-year member of SDCMS-CMA and board certified in head and neck surgery, is chief of staff at Kaiser Permanente in San Diego. The Kaiser network includes more than 500 primary care physicians and 700 specialists, and provides care to more than 600,000 members. Dr. Paul Bernstein can be reached at (619) 528-7755 or at paul.e.bernstein@kp.org.

Question: What is your leadership philosophy?

Answer: I have a hands-on, open-door policy. I believe one should lead by example, from your clinical practice to your work ethic to how engaged you are for your physicians. Influence is communicating well and focusing on patients. Engaging physicians happens by driving patient-focused care, creating a “Yes” culture and a “Yes” philosophy. Our core competency is legacy-inspired excellence. The physicians who started Kaiser Permanente demonstrated early in our history that prevention improves outcomes.

Question: What should physicians do to prepare for the future of healthcare?

Answer: We must embrace change, as the only thing certain is uncertainty. Abraham Lincoln said the only way to predict the future is to create it. We have many programs that help us serve patients in innovative ways, from (1) Health Everywhere, where our patients choose the care they want, where, when, and how they want it, (2) Health Spot at the County of San Diego campus, where 4,000 of our members can use the futuristic kiosk in the lobby to see a physician in Carmel Valley who can do a “complete” exam using remote biometric measuring instruments, (3) A Mobile Health vehicle with two exam rooms and a lab that is a medical office building on the road, enabling us to care for patients in Ramona and Alpine once a week without having them drive to us, and (4) two Target stores with nurse practitioners and a virtual exam room with biometric equipment to virtually consult with a physician when needed.

To help our 1,200 physicians stay connected, we provide them KP iPhones that are fingerprint-protected and allow them to conduct patient business with HIPAA-compliant apps. They can get information via text and can respond and send images. This has helped the engagement of over 1,000 physicians and 21 office buildings. It is easier to communicate back and forth to provide both coordinated and complete care for our patient, specialty, and primary care in one visit. With one click, a physician can text or call the specialist on call. There is no need to play phone tag – and we know who we are talking to.

We stay connected and learn from each other. We stay connected through the San Diego County Medical Society to help each other improve overall patient care – not just our own patients, our overall community. We are involved in Project Access San Diego to provide medical care to the uninsured citizens in San Diego County.

Question: What advice do you have for young / incoming physician leaders?

Answer: Focus on medicine as a profession and not as a job. For a new leader, keep the focus on the patient. It’s about a calling – caring how you make patients feel. When someone leaves your office, it’s how you make them feel that they’ll remember, your compassion. This resonates with our patients and workforce. Get involvement and get teams of physicians who want to work on a variety of aspects of healthcare.

Question: What does organizational culture mean to you, and how do you drive it?

Answer: Culture builds enthusiasm and

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engagement. Our “Yes” culture centers all of us on our patients and creating excellence. Our history is being a health plan, not a sick plan. We are focused on prevention and keeping our patients healthy. We have an all-staff service event (with all 8,000 staff and 1,200 doctors) teaching our “Yes” culture of patient-centered care – treating the patient the way we and our families would want to be treated.

We reinforce the culture at different levels, and I do everything I can, from weekly physician emails that summarize everything (it condenses 60 emails into one) to a weekly three-minute podcast that is sent to our docs’ iPhones. I attend big group meetings, new physician orientations, and weekly breakfast meetings. Our associates go to SCPMG University to learn the history of our organization, patient communication skills, principles of partnership, our board of directors, and how we function as a group.

Question: What has worked for engaging your staff that CEOs and leaders in other industries can learn from?

Answer: Focus on culture, be a team of colleagues, lead by example, be hands on, and see problems and change as opportunities. **SDP**



Dr. Nooravi is an organizational psychologist and CEO of Strategy Meets Performance, a leadership consulting firm that focuses on helping

CEOs of fast-growth companies shape engaging, innovative, and customer-driven cultures through executive coaching and senior team facilitation. She has been named “Trailblazer of the Year” for her research on the best practices of CEOs of high-performing organizations. She can be reached at sherry@strategymeetsperformance.com or at (312) 286-0325.

Points to Consider

1.

A Yes Culture.

What are you doing to create a “Yes” culture to engage both your physicians and patients?

2.

Change Is Coming.

What actions are you taking and what behaviors are you promoting to help your team prepare for and drive change?

3.

Driving Culture.

What touchpoints do you have to drive the behavior and culture you want to shape (such as staff events, consistent communication, sharing the values of the organization and expectations for patient communication)?