

I'm Nancy Formella and I want to talk a little bit about what Transforming Medicine really means. What does it mean to our patients? What does it mean to our community?

This medical center is all about the community. And what we do here everyday is serve our patients and our neighbors. That's how this medical center started a century ago, that's why 100 years before that, Nathan Smith started Dartmouth Medical School. Service to our patients, our community remains at the core of what we do today.

We provide care in an academic medical center. A WHAT you might ask? An academic medical center. As lofty and somewhat stuffy as that sounds, it isn't that at all. Academic medicine is about inquiry and about always figuring out how to do it better. And when done the Dartmouth way, it's empowering and it's exciting and it makes coming to work - - whether you're a nurse, a tech, a surgeon, an anesthesiologist, or respiratory therapist -- a wonderful thing

You see, here at DHMC, we not only have permission to question how we do things, we have a charge to question it. Leaders here know that it's only through questioning and shining light on problems and inadequacies that things get better. So we don't just acknowledge the need to do better - we embrace it. And then we sit down - not just one or two people, not just the surgeon, not just the lead physician - but the doctors, the nurses, everyone on the care team, and we look at our practices and our process and together, we figure out how to make it better.

So, Transforming medicine is a great phrase, but it doesn't really tell you about what goes on here every day as we care for people. I'd like to use a couple of stories to tell you what transforming medicine means to us on a daily basis: it means transforming care and transforming lives.

Pain. Something we all avoid. At Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center we have a low tolerance for pain. That is, we work hard to eliminate it from our patient's experiences. We have a pain-free center dedicated to the delivery of treatments to children without causing pain. We study pain management for adults and we work on ways to understand how it acts in the body, how patients respond to it and how we can prevent it and treat it. Are we successful? Listen to the words of a patient telling us about her father's care:

"Each time I let the nurse know that my dad was uncomfortable, he medicated my dad and kept him comfortable. When I asked what the pain med orders were he summarized them as "basically as much as he needs and as much as he can tolerate." Holy Cow!! Someone finally figured out real pain management!!! " That's the kind of great work that goes on in this academic medical center. Searching until we find an answer and not resting until our patients can rest. Transforming care.

Team work is essential to this great work. By listening to each other and working together, we transform lives in ways that individuals could not do. A second example, written again, by a patient's relative: "There is not doubt in any of our minds that (my father) remains with us today because of the expertise, professionalism, and diligence demonstrated by the team of doctors and nurses throughout the duration of his treatment.

The result of the way we provide care is transformation of process and transformation of care patterns that results in more appropriate care, better outcomes, quicker recoveries, and shorter hospital stays. Our work in cardiac surgery is world renowned . Why? Because we have had the courage to look at our results, to question them, and to change our daily work to improve them. Patients leave stronger, healthier, and faster than they did before. And that transforms their lives and incrementally transforms the health care system by making it more efficient and less costly.

That's a lot of transformation. But there's one more piece that gets transformed. And that's us, the people involved in delivering patient care. By giving everyone on the health care team a place at the table and a voice in the process, we reaffirm how critical each person is to the complex systems that are modern health care. And every person at that table comes away owning a piece of the process and knowing they're a part of the solution.

This may all sound routine, but I will tell you it's not this way in other clinical settings. One of the reasons I am so proud to work here is because we are not afraid – even in an increasingly challenging atmosphere for health care – to say that we can and must do better. When colleagues from other institutions learn that we not only share our outcomes internally, but post them on our web site for our patients, they're stunned. How can you do that, they ask. Aren't you worried about making all that public?

No, we're not! We know that only by being open and transparent – not just about what we're good at, but about what we're not so good at – will we change. We know it because we've seen it. And we know it because it works.

I said at the start that this place is all about the patient. And that's true. But it's not one-dimensional. We're not only thinking about what we can do for the patient, we're thinking and we're constantly aware of what our patients do for us. Our patients are our teachers. And in a place that is constantly in the business of inquiry and trying to make things work better, all of us play a dual role of teacher and student. Nurses teach medical students, physicians teach residents – we all at some time teach each other. And the patients are included in that process. They are in fact, our very best teachers.

As Dr. Payson said, the work we're doing here is moving out of the Upper Valley. Other people are studying it, the media are writing about it, model programs and pilot projects are being based on it, and there are increasing numbers of people who are thinking that in a lot of areas, we might have the key.

That's great and I'm proud of all of our staff who are out there spreading the word. But what we export from the Upper Valley are the ideas, the models, the practices. The care and the innovations in care, the improved treatments and therapies, they start here in this community and they work everyday to benefit the patients of our region.

That's the way it should be. This community was our first partner and that bond between us remains the most steadfast and meaningful. The community has contributed immeasurably to our success and we hope, has benefited from our efforts. Working together, we are all transforming medicine.

Thank you.