Credentialing Resource Center Journal

Profile: 2017 CRC Medical Staff Professional of the Year

The 2017 CRC Medical Staff Professional of the Year is...
Olivia Loeffler, CPMSM, CPCS, director of medical staff services
Glendale (California) Adventist Medical Center

Editor's note: This profile is part of the special 2017 CRC contest coverage, a collaboration between ***Credentialing Resource Center Journal****,* ***Medical Staff Briefing****, and* ***Credentialing Resource Center Daily****. Check back in throughout Winners' Week to learn more about this year's CRC Achievement Awards and CRC Symposium Case Study Competition winners.*

If there's one strength **Olivia Loeffler, CPMSM, CPCS,** will claim without protest, it's an affinity for learning.

"I'm always going to be learning more and more and more from somebody else, from my peers, from conferences," says Loeffler, who is director of medical staff services at Glendale (California) Adventist Medical Center, a member hospital of Adventist Health.

This pursuit of continual development has caught the eye of executive leaders across her health system, which includes 20 hospitals, more than 260 clinics, and 15 postacute care facilities throughout California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington.

"I love the 'I'm always learning' attitude, and the 'I don't know it all, but I'm willing to reach out to find the answer'—that is Olivia," says **Marcia Dean, BS, CPMSM.** As Adventist Health's corporate director of medical staff services, Dean oversees the system's 20 medical staff services departments and 65 MSPs.

Loeffler's drive doesn't stop at the classroom door; she's also adept at applying newfound knowledge in the field. Since joining Glendale in October 2013, she's cultivated a brand-new medical staff services team, introduced a host of engagement tools that have helped ratchet up practitioner satisfaction scores to historic highs, and spearheaded the hospital's transition to an electronic credentialing and meeting management model.

"She's just so capable. She's grown so quickly," says **Kevin Roberts, FACHE, MPA, RN,** president and CEO of Glendale and Loeffler's direct manager. "The amount of growth she's had personally and professionally really seems to exceed the amount of time she's sat in that chair."

But ask Loeffler to reflect on these accomplishments, and she's likelier to shift the focus to opportunities and next steps—which invariably revolve around improving the practitioner experience—or redirect praise to supportive colleagues like Dean, whom she calls a mentor and "wonderful friend."

This winning combination of ambition, application, and graciousness inspired Dean and Roberts to each nominate Loeffler for the 2017 CRC Medical Staff Professional of the Year award. Their pair of glowing endorsements, in turn, compelled the expert selection panel to name Loeffler a winner in the inaugural CRC Achievement Awards.

"I was very impressed with the number of projects that Olivia successfully tackled. Each of them in and of themselves is a tremendous accomplishment!" says **Jennifer Svetlecic, MD, FCCP,** selection panel member and system director of medical staff development at St. Luke's Health System in Kansas City, Missouri.

Team (re)building

When Loeffler joined Glendale, her previous medical staff services leadership experience consisted of supervisory positions in small facilities, including four years as department leader at Castle Medical Center, a 160-bed Adventist Health facility in Kailua, Hawaii. The move to Glendale—the largest hospital in the Adventist Health system—meant a huge shift in scale: the hospital has 515 beds, more than 800 credentialed practitioners, and a seven-person medical staff services department.

The challenge of acclimating to this expansive environment might have felled a lesser leader, but Loeffler faced an even greater obstacle: natural attrition chipping away at Glendale's MSP workforce. Since joining the hospital, Loeffler has replaced every position in the medical staff services department—a move that entailed getting a brand-new team up to speed on Glendale's history, culture, and protocols, all while simultaneously learning the

ropes herself. Roberts and Dean attribute her success in these endeavors to grit and an engaging leadership style.

“She had a knack for finding good people and growing them well, training them well, and creating a culture and a department that drives people to high performance,” says Roberts. Thanks to her hands-on coaching and advocacy for professional development, team members who initially struggled to meet performance standards are now taking on additional responsibility, and several staff have earned professional certification. “I credit those results—human results—to Olivia’s leadership style and how much she cares for and loves her staff,” says Roberts.

Fostering engagement

Since joining Glendale, Loeffler has pioneered a number of initiatives and innovations to improve the medical staff’s connectivity, professional satisfaction, and overall well-being, including the following:

- Developing an orientation booklet to acquaint new physician leaders with key medical staff governance structures and responsibilities, including meeting management, peer review, governing board organization, and credentialing approaches.
- Publishing *Medical Staff Matters*, a monthly newsletter that summarizes key actions and motions from medical executive committee meetings to keep the entire medical staff in the know about important developments that may impact their practice. The publication also features articles and photos celebrating medical staff successes, such as productive collaborations between administrators and practitioners.
- Issuing a hard-copy directory featuring contact information and photos for all affiliated practitioners to promote efficient cross-referrals. (Loeffler also had professional photos taken of her entire team to elevate their standing in the hospital community.)
- Partnering with the medical staff to develop an interdisciplinary collaboration compact, which medical staff members and administrators sign upon joining Glendale and renew annually. The agreement establishes a precedent for interdisciplinary teamwork and collegial discourse, which underlie innovative care delivery.
- Instituting a dedicated policy for addressing disruptive physician behavior. The intervention targets tensions between physicians and nursing staff that have historically jeopardized patient safety, hampered team-based care, and eroded medical staff morale.

In addition to improving written communication, Loeffler has increased the visibility of key medical staff leaders by introducing a wall of fame that honors chiefs of staff throughout Glendale’s century-long history. The photo-based display recognizes these leaders’ important contributions to patient care, medical staff governance, and overall hospital quality—work that too often goes unacknowledged. “We put administrators’ pictures on the wall; how come we’re not putting the chief of staff on the wall?” Dean asks. “Putting a picture on the wall may not seem like a big deal, but it is because what it’s saying is, ‘you’re just as important to me as my administrator.’ ”

Sweating out burnout

Like any modern-day healthcare professional, Loeffler has seen her share of burnout. A particularly resonant episode occurred last year, when an engaged and active medical staff member abruptly announced her resignation one Monday morning after a weekend of introspection. “She said, ‘If I don’t do that, I’m going to lose myself,’ so she walked away,” Loeffler recalls. “We were all shocked.”

Galvanized by this incident, and others that followed, Loeffler has begun laying the groundwork for a physician well-being committee, a project that involves extensive research, policy development, and mobilization of internal and external collaborators. Her ultimate goal is to cultivate a program that supports holistic well-being, connecting practitioners to coaching and counseling services that address professional and personal stressors before they manifest as burnout, behavioral issues, or practice lapses.

While she incubates this program, Loeffler is rolling out smaller-scale innovations to fortify practitioner wellness. Notably, her department partnered with a cardiologist on the medical staff to replace the hodgepodge of outdated and unsafe workout machines in the physicians’ lounge with a sleek new gym. After learning the administrative budget for the project was insufficient, the collaborators launched a two-year fundraising campaign, partnering with the Healthcare Foundation at Glendale Adventist Medical Center, the hospital’s affiliated philanthropic organization, to ultimately pay for the initiative. Last August, they unveiled the new gym, which features an array of contemporary equipment, including ellipticals, treadmills, indoor cycles, dumbbells, benches and racks, and multi-function machines. Practitioners “just love” the inviting space, which provides a welcome reprieve from their stressful work and an opportunity to focus on their own health, says Loeffler. Now, her team is working to extend the gym’s modern aesthetic to the surrounding environment with brand-new couches.

Loeffler’s significant strides in improving the practitioner experience are not just anecdotal—Glendale’s regular practitioner surveys reveal measurable gains in medical staff morale. Since Loeffler joined the Glendale ranks, the hospital has sustained the highest practitioner satisfaction ratings in history for the medical staff services department and for overall experience—achievements Roberts believes Loeffler has directly affected. “I’m sure

she contributed to the global score, and she certainly influenced the local score in her department."

Going paperless

Adventist Health has set a goal to implement paperless credentialing processes across its 20 hospitals by the end of next year, and Loeffler has been at the forefront of the movement. During her tenure at Castle Medical Center, the first Adventist facility to go paperless, she was part of the planning process. Since moving over to Glendale, she's led her team in making the switch, a tremendous undertaking given the facility's size and 100 years' worth of paper to sift through. Despite the project's scope, Loeffler managed an expedient transition, making Glendale the third Adventist hospital to go paperless.

"Her ability to move to paperless was probably the quickest I've seen and was not an easy process," says Dean. Beyond making sense of mountains of paper, Loeffler had to convince her staff that the long-term gains in efficiency would outweigh the initial disruptions to routine and the legwork of implementation. She also had to persuade Roberts that the ultimate payoff was worth the significant expense of hiring a company to scan credentialing files for all current medical staff members. "She got the resources she needed to get it done and get it done timely," says Dean. "I was very impressed."

After getting Roberts' go-ahead, Loeffler set to work making the transition, a process that involved identifying a reputable company to scan all active files, negotiating the contract, and determining a secure method for storing and processing virtual files.

Beyond conceptualizing and overseeing the transition, Loeffler has shared her implementation strategy with colleagues across Adventist Health through conference calls and live presentations. Notably, she presented at the annual medical staff services summit, a two-day in-person educational event for the system's 65 MSPs.

Loeffler has also applied the paperless approach to medical staff meetings, dipping in to her department's operating budget to purchase an iPad® collection, which she's configured with software for securely capturing meeting agendas, minutes, and quality reports.

Her efforts have saved Glendale countless reams of paper and strengthened its confidentiality safeguards—instead of rounding up hard copies of sensitive materials and ensuring they're recycled in a secure manner, meeting participants can now simply delete confidential files from their iPad. After witnessing these improvements in action, Roberts decided to roll out the paperless process at his governing board meetings, calling on Loeffler for guidance in making the transition.

"Shouldn't the CEO be leading these kinds of innovations? Well, no, not this time—it was the director of medical staff services who showed us how to do it," says Roberts. "Talk about influencing."

Adopting the right mindset

While Loeffler's extensive contributions to Glendale—and the Adventist Health system at large—provide ample testament to her leadership chops, the true source of her professional success is her distinctive outlook, according to Roberts and Dean.

"When she gets new knowledge, she doesn't keep it to herself," Dean explains. "That's one of the problems I see across the industry, is we all go out and we get information, we bring it back to our site, maybe implement it at our site, and then it stops there," says Dean. Instead, MSPs should seek out platforms for imparting their knowledge. Loeffler, for example, is quick to share her policies and processes with other Adventist Health hospitals so her colleagues "do not have to reinvent the wheel," says Dean. Loeffler also orchestrates formal learning opportunities. In January, she arranged for a consulting group to present an on-site peer review training for Glendale's 21 physician leaders, working with Roberts to cover all costs for participants.

Not only is Loeffler eager to share her expertise—and to set the stage for others to do the same—she's willing to face her limitations and seek fresh perspectives. Dean considers this mindset a key differentiator. "That is a big deal. I have some sites that don't reach out, and they end up going down the wrong path, or they don't necessarily have the knowledge they need to make the best decisions."

Perhaps even more profound than Loeffler's voracity for knowledge is her propensity for forging meaningful connections with colleagues from all walks of life. These interpersonal skills have allowed her to tap into unrealized potential among team members and to suss out sources of—and solutions for—rifts among medical staff members. "What she contributes most to the hospital is insight into the interpersonal dynamics of the doctors—when someone's upset, she's usually got enough context to figure out why they're upset and how to advise people on how to get that doctor calmed," says Roberts. "It's the emotional intelligence about people that really sets her apart beyond these projects, these enhancements. I think that has a lot to do with how her staff works together, too."

About the 2017 CRC Contests

The 2017 CRC Symposium Case Study Competition and the 2017 CRC Achievement Awards are two inaugural contests recognizing MSPs and medical staff leaders who have made exceptional strides in their organization and the broader professional community. Winners, who were selected by a panel of esteemed industry experts, will be honored at the 2017 CRC Symposium, held April 6–7 in Austin, Texas.

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