

Introducing Dr. Mark A. Keroack

Chief Physician Executive and President, Baystate Medical Practices

By Patricia Gagnon



As chief physician executive, Dr. Keroack provides clinical oversight for all physician activities within Baystate Health, including the activities of the clinical department chairs and chief medical officers. As president of Baystate Medical Practices, he is responsible for more than 425 physicians and 125 advanced practitioners in nearly 75 Baystate practices across western Massachusetts. Both roles center on a commitment to ensure outstanding medical care, innovative medical education, and leading edge medical research.

What attracted you to Baystate Health?

Baystate Health has a national reputation. I was aware of the outstanding results the system was achieving in quality and safety. I also knew that Baystate was committed to being an early adopter of a more

integrated system of care to improve coordination and efficiency. I really wanted to be part of that pioneering work.

Are there things about Baystate Health that seem unique to you?

For starters, there's the Massachusetts environment. We are way out in front of other states in adapting to the challenges of a reformed health care system and in covering the great majority of our citizens. Even within

On June 15, Mark Keroack, MD, MPH, joined the senior leadership team as chief physician executive and president, Baystate Medical Practices. He came to Baystate Health from University HealthSystem Consortium in Oak Brook, Illinois where he served as senior vice president and chief medical officer.

Massachusetts, Baystate has done more than its competitors in assembling most of the components of an integrated system: strong primary care, advanced specialty care, state-of-the-art facilities, comprehensive home care, a robust physician hospital organization, and even a health plan.

Are there specific health care issues locally and beyond you would like to address as chief physician executive and president, Baystate Medical Practices?

I think all of us will be under increased pressure to demonstrate quality, safety, and service compared to

national standards using a rapidly expanding set of measures. And we'll need to reduce costs too, in ways that don't negatively impact patients. We are witnessing the opening act of health reform: the government will spend billions of dollars to foster new approaches to care delivery and expect to see costs come under control as a result. Managed care plans will likely follow suit.

Some academic health systems will prosper in this new world, and I think Baystate is uniquely positioned to innovate and advance our mission of clinical excellence, teaching, and research. This will take exceptional teamwork and focus. Part of the requirements of the new role of chief physician executive is to build bridges to private practice physicians as key partners in the design of new and better approaches to care.

What perspective do you bring to this new role?

For about 20 years, I practiced infectious disease and was involved with teaching students, residents, and fellows. For 15 of those years, I was a busy primary care physician for patients with HIV and AIDS. Those experiences shaped me both as a physician and a person. I learned that even when there are no cures, people look to good doctors to provide comfort, support, and under-

standing. For the last several years, I've worn a suit more often than a white coat, but I'm still driven by the same values that led me to medicine.

You are a native of Springfield, MA. What do you like most about coming back to your hometown?

The Keroacks have deep roots here. My dad was a general practitioner with an office right in our house in the Sixteen Acres area (my parents still live there). He subsequently was the first chief of Emergency Services, first at Wesson Memorial Hospital and then at Baystate Medical Center. Since all four of my brothers became doctors too, I guess you'd have to say that the culture of medicine was pretty strong growing up in my family.

Coming back to visit the Pioneer Valley, where I grew up and went to college, has always been a special treat, particularly during my years in Chicago. The area has scenic beauty, culture, a proud history, and proximity to the beaches and the mountains. The friendly reception I've gotten from the staff has made it feel like a real homecoming—it will be fun to have some company wearing a Red Sox hat, too!

About Dr. Keroack

Dr. Keroack came to Baystate Health from University HealthSystem Consortium (UHC) in Oak Brook, Illinois where he served as senior vice president and chief medical officer. At UHC, a national alliance of 112 academic medical centers, he oversaw programs for clinical and operational performance improvement, faculty group practice management and patient safety. He is the co-creator of the Faculty Practice Solutions Center database and the UHC Patient Safety Net adverse event reporting system, both of which are in use at Baystate Health. He also led UHC's research to define the leadership and management practices associated with top organizational performance in quality care.

Prior to his national work, Dr. Keroack served on the faculty of the University of Massachusetts Medical School for

12 years. During that time, he was a busy practitioner focusing on HIV and AIDS care and won five annual teaching awards. Beginning in 1995, Dr. Keroack took on a more administrative role, serving as the first president of the 700-physician UMass Memorial Medical Group and the vice president of Medical Management for UMass Memorial Health Care. He has authored over 50 publications.

Dr. Keroack is a graduate of Amherst College and Harvard Medical School and received his MPH from Boston University. He trained in internal medicine and infectious diseases at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.