TOP WOMEN LEADERS
IN HEALTH CARE
Considering the challenging times we are faced with due to the coronavirus crisis, it has become particularly evident that solid leadership in the health care sector — which has always been important — has become more essential than ever. Health care professionals put themselves in harm’s way to help keep our communities safe, and the industry’s leaders have transformational decisions to make every day.

There are some particularly stellar health industry stewards in the Los Angeles region who happen to be women, and we’ve alphabetically listed some of the best here, along with some information about their careers and recent successes.

The health care leaders listed in these pages were chosen by the Los Angeles Business Journal for exceptional stewardship and achievement across the full spectrum of responsibility, exemplary leadership as evidenced by the highest professional and ethical standards, and for contributions to the health and well-being of the Los Angeles community at large.

Congratulations to the extraordinary women who made this list and thank you for working to keep the people and businesses of Los Angeles healthy in a time like this.

Best regards,

Josh Schimmels
Publisher & CEO

Top doctors deserve top leadership.

Congratulations to our President and CEO, Lori J. Morgan, MD, MBA, for being recognized as one of 2020’s Top Women in Healthcare.

Find your top doctor at: HuntingtonHospital.org/Doctors
Congratulations to Johnese Spisso, UCLA Health President & CEO, UCLA Hospital System, who has been recognized as one of LA’s Top Women Leaders in Health Care. Your visionary and compassionate leadership inspires the entire UCLA Health family and the communities that it serves throughout Southern California and the world during these unprecedented times.
BETH ANDERSON
President, California Commercial
Anthem Blue Cross

Beth Anderson brings a wealth of knowledge in healthcare experience to her new role as California Plan president at Anthem, having spent 30 years in the industry, including several leadership positions. Most recently Anderson led Anthem Blue Cross’ large group sales business unit where she is personally focused on deepening provider collaborations. She also fosters deeper collaborations with providers so that Anthem has better outcomes for its members and so that the company can guide members to the right care at the right time in the right settings. Anderson is a proven leader in sales, product development and launch, provider network development and operations, regional P&L management, and government relations.

BHAVANA AORA
Chief Medical Officer, CHLA Health Network
Children’s Hospital Los Angeles

A chief medical officer for the CHLA Health network, Bhavana Aora leads assessment and development of potential health system partnerships with administrative leadership, overseeing both economic and clinical modeling. She also implements and manages hospital partnerships to ensure access to high quality pediatric care delivered by more than 200 CHLA medical group physicians across four Southern California counties. Dr. Aora is passionate about elevating the health of communities and building ecosystems to support providers, patients and families. She works with pediatrics in the community to ensure treatment for the mental health needs of the patients, including education with partnerships and guides to support, which has led to more patients receiving care. She also finalized implementation guide for telehealth services and the virtual care implementation plan and launched the behavioral health program to increase capacity of pediatricians to treat mental health conditions.

LOURDES BAEZCONDE-GARBARATI, PHD
Professor in Preventive Medicine, USC, Associate Dean for Community Initiatives, Keck School of Medicine, USC; Senior Advisor, U Penn Comprehensive Cancer Center; Director, Center for Health Equity in the Americas, Keck School of Medicine of USC.

Lourdes Baezconde-Garbarati is professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, for which she oversees research on cancer prevention and control. She is also the associate dean of community and patient initiatives, developing intervention programs in local communities that improve overall health, especially of high-risk populations. Dr. Baezconde-Garbarati set up more than a dozen programs and more than 150 events, reaching thousands from the underserved population in our community with health promotion and disease prevention messaging, as well as outreach and screening. As Chair of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, Dr. Baezconde-Garbarati engaged more than 15 million Hispanics nationally with science-based programming, research, education, policy, and services.

KAVITHA BHATIA, MD, MMM
Chief Medical Officer, Strategy
Prime Healthcare

Kavitha Bhatia leads the development and implementation of strategic initiatives that advance the mission and success of Prime Healthcare. Dr. Bhatia works with corporate and hospital leaders to align goals, prioritize system-wide value creation and implement strategic initiatives to ensure Prime’s continued operational, financial and clinical success. Dr. Bhatia’s leadership and vision have helped Prime build the infrastructure to leverage its unique value and national scale, leading to improved efficiency, standardization, and quality care at 45 hospitals across the U.S. Prime’s Patient Experience improvement strategy, led by Dr. Bhatia, employs evidence-based approaches that remove barriers to empathy that caregivers encounter that allows them to exceed patient expectations. Her leadership has led to improvements at a rate that is outpacing Prime’s closest competitors. In addition, Dr. Bhatia helped establish Prime’s self-funded employee health plan where employees and dependants pay little to nothing for health care at Prime facilities.

JACQUELINE BRACY, MD
OB/GYN and President
Emanate Health Medical Group

Jacqueline Bracy, md, and active OB/GYN physician who specializes in gynecology, women’s health and gynecologic and pelvic surgery, also serves as president of Emanate Health Medical Group. Dr. Bracy has overseen the expansion of Emanate Health Medical Group from one physician to more than 40, with plans to increase to at least 50. The increase is noteworthy because many of these physicians will work in Emanate Health’s new hospital-based, outpatient clinic that allows the health system to provide the continuum of care to patients in all stages of a life, which is critical to expanding market share in the region. In addition, she has been responsible for improving access of care to the underprivileged, promoting the delivery of chronic and specialty care to the underserved and driving patient safety in recent years.

MARA BRYANT
Operations Executive
Adventist Health White Memorial

Mara Bryant is a medical center operations executive who also helps lead operations-related strategy for Adventist Health White Memorial, ensuring an understanding of key imperatives from the local market. She directs operational responsibility for many departments – including ancillary services and clinics. Taking an important leadership role to continue applying Baldrige criteria to the organization and improving overall clinical quality and organizational performance has been a focus for many years. Bryant played a key role in Adventist Health White Memorial becoming the first organization in Los Angeles to win the prestigious 2019 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Under Bryant’s leadership, Adventist Health White Memorial has grown to help meet the needs of the community in broadening services offered at the hospital and community outreach. The innovative ideas and efficiencies generated by her and her team have made this possible.

CONSIGLIO (CONNIE) B. CASILLAS, MD
Family Physician
Southern California Permanente Medical Group Partner

Connie Casillas, a family physician, leads in the clinical care of patients by delivering outcomes for chronic disease and preventive health measures that consistently exceed internal and external benchmarks. She received the Family Physician of the Year award for Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center for her exemplary work clinically and as an advocate for health equity within her organization. For outstanding leadership and inspiration in mentorship, she was awarded the MiMentor Alma Award in 2019. Dr. Casillas demonstrates a commitment to the delivery of equitable care to diverse populations by tirelessly working on efforts within and outside of her organization to promote effective pathways to healthcare for underrepresented in medicine (UM) students. She has mentored summer pre-health professionals students from the Health Career Connections, INROADS Programs at Kaiser on innovative projects for pathways and health equity for the past five years.
CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL LOS ANGELES congratulates
Dr. Bhavana Arora, Dr. Cynthia Herrington, Lara Khouri and Dr. Mona Patel
for their selection as Los Angeles Business Journal Top Women in Health Care!

Bhavana Arora, MD
Chief Medical Officer, CHLA Health Network

Lara Khouri, MBA, MPH
Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer

Cynthia Herrington, MD
Vice President, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer; Program Director, Congenital Cardiac Surgery Fellowship

Mona Patel, MD
Director of Clinical Ambulatory Operations

When you choose Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, you are choosing pediatric experts like these. Our hundreds of specialists across 350 programs and services are passionate about creating hope and building healthier futures for all children.

Find a doctor at CHLA.org

Children’s Hospital
LOS ANGELES.
KITA CURRY, PHD
CEO & President
Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services

As CEO and President of Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, Kita Curry is in the chief visionary, spokesperson, and fundraiser for the organization. She is responsible for the fiscal and clinical performance of the non-profit agency with an annual budget of $55 million, ten sites, 250 volunteers and 550 staff. Under Dr. Curry’s leadership, Didi Hirsch has grown significantly. The annual budget has tripled since she took the helm. In October 2018, Didi Hirsch opened a new permanent home for its Suicide Prevention Center to address growing demand for the agency’s lifesaving services. The space enabled Didi Hirsch to expand existing programs and add vital new ones. Dr. Curry has also helped make mental health stigma a national cause by speaking openly about her own experience with depression, suicidal loss and an attempt. She often notes she felt it was her duty to make the agency’s mission personal.

MARGIE HARRIER
Senior Vice President, Area Manager
Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center

Margie A. Harrier, RN, is the senior vice president and area manager for Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center where she manages hospital and health plan operations. Harrier had previously served at Kaiser Permanente Orange County since 2005, most recently in the role of chief operating officer, where she led the opening and licensure of both the Irvine and Anaheim Medical Centers. With over 25 years of health care experience, she has held the positions of chief nursing officer, vice president of patient care services, and chief operating officer within both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from California State University, Fullerton, and a master’s degree in nursing administration from the UCLA. Additionally, Harrier completed the Executive Leadership Program offered by Kaiser Permanente in collaboration with Harvard Business School.

MONA PATEL GERA, MD, FAAP
Vice President of Ambulatory Operations
Children’s Hospital Los Angeles

Monal Patel’s responsibilities at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles include leadership in overseeing the ambulatory operations of more than 24 hospital-based clinics and six community specialty care centers. She is focused on standardizing care practice across the continuum and instilling the quadruple aim in health care modeling. As a pioneer in her field, Dr. Patel is an innovator in delivering pediatric care to children with complex special needs living in Los Angeles County. Her work has led to the development of a coordinated health care delivery system for more than 1,500 families with special needs that include accessible care, coordinated care, and comprehensive care, helping this diverse and socio-economically challenged population. In addition, she has collected data to demonstrate better health with decreased utilization of the emergency room, fewer hospitalizations and fewer visits to the doctor’s office, by providing families 24/7 phone access to a health professional.

CYNTHIA HERRINGTON, MD
Vice President and Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer; Surgical Director of the Heart Transplant Program
Children’s Hospital Los Angeles

Cynthia Herrington is surgical director of the Heart Transplant Program in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. She is one of only a handful of women cardiac surgeons in the country. Dr. Herrington successfully performed CHLA’s first ever dextrocardia transplant, one of the most complex surgeries of her 20-year career as a congenital cardiothoracic surgeon. Her current research focus is providing support options for Fontan patients. In collaboration with colleagues at CHLA and USC’s Viterbi School of Engineering, she designed an artificial right atrium that can be implanted to enable surgeons to safely perform Fontan patients on bi-ventricular mechanical assist. As CHLA’s inaugural chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer, Dr. Herrington provides vision, thought leadership, strategic direction and coordination for organization-wide efforts to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion.

CAROLINE GOLDFRIBERG, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Cedars-Sinai Medical Network

As chief medical officer for the Cedars-Sinai Medical Network, Caroline Goldfrieberg leads change in a fast-growing physician practice network with more than 300 physicians, 150 advanced practice practitioners and 2,000 employees. Dr. Goldfriedbeg develops and promotes strategies to enhance healthcare quality and value while building a culture of safety, creating outstanding experiences for staff and patients, and addressing patients’ critical clinical needs. She has improved quality performance for seniors (Medicare Advantage) to a four-star rating; created a program addressing experience across all stakeholders – staff, physicians, and patients – establishing top patient satisfaction scores in California and marked improvement in staff and physician engagement. She also reduced high dose chronic opiate use; decreased prolonged courses of opiates in acute pain; reduced inappropriate antibiotic use in viral infections by more than 50%; and drove marked improvement in “culture of safety?” and expanded opportunities for patients to access mental healthcare.

MELISSA HOWARD
Chief Nursing and Clinical Executive, Foothill Presbyterian Hospital/InterCommunity Hospital
Emmanate Health

Melissa Howard is in charge of all nursing and clinical areas including radiology, wound care, transitional care unit and laboratory areas for Inter-Community Hospital in Covina and Foothill Presbyterian Hospital in Glendora, and the management of a team of nurses and staff. She's also a member of the health system's executive leadership team. Howard played a critical leadership role in the 2019 system-wide installation of the Meditech Expanse program, an electronic health record system, which helped to promote greater physician engagement and patient outcomes. She also successfully guided several Green Belt projects to substantially improve patient safety, employee retention and financial sustainability at ICH and FPH. Howard also guides a program that helps to improve the health system's mental health population by implementing evidence-based tools and practices. She also mentors nursing graduates to embrace the value of compassion care.

ALICE ISSAI
President
Adventist Health Glendale

As the president of Adventist Health Glendale, a full-service, 515-bed acute care teaching facility in Glendale, Alice Issai is responsible for the healthcare needs of more than 145,000 patients each year. Her leadership has directly impacted the quality of life and health of residents in Glendale and the surrounding area. Under Issai’s leadership, Adventist Health Glendale began the year with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services awarding the facility five stars — the highest possible — for quality, one of only a small handful of facilities to achieve that honor. The facility also received the Leapfrog Group’s ‘A’ grade for the 12th consecutive time, an achievement fewer than 3.5% of hospitals nationwide can boast. Additionally, under Issai’s stewardship, the facility earned top recognition for its comprehensive stroke care from the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. Issai is the first woman to lead Adventist Health Glendale.

STEPHANIE L. HALL, MD, MHA, FACP
Chief Medical Officer, Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital; Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs, Keck School of Medicine
Keck Medicine of USC

Stephanie Hall is chief medical officer of Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital and associate dean of clinical affairs for the Keck School of Medicine (KSOM). Her responsibilities include leading the quality and outcomes department, accreditation activities, licensing and regulatory affairs, medical staff administration and safety and emergency management. Hall’s initiatives have resulted in the systematic improvement in quality outcomes at the Keck Medical Center leading to recognition by the American Heart Association with the Gold Plus Award for Heart Failure and the Leapfrog Group with a Hospital Safety Score of ‘A.’ Hall has led system-wide programs dramatically reducing the incidence of hospital-acquired conditions such as infections and blood clots. Her efforts have led to improvements in the early detection and treatment of sepsis, improvements in patient blood management and reduced mortality rates.

CAROLINE GOLDZWEIG, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Keck Medical Center

Dr. Goldzweig leads change in a fast-growing physician practice network with more than 300 physicians, 150 advanced practice practitioners and 2,000 employees. Dr. Goldzweig develops and promotes strategies to enhance healthcare quality and value while building a culture of safety, creating outstanding experiences for staff and patients, and addressing patients’ critical clinical needs. She has improved quality performance for seniors (Medicare Advantage) to a four-star rating; created a program addressing experience across all stakeholders – staff, physicians, and patients – establishing top patient satisfaction scores in California and marked improvement in staff and physician engagement. She also reduced high dose chronic opiate use; decreased prolonged courses of opiates in acute pain; reduced inappropriate antibiotic use in viral infections by more than 50%; and drove marked improvement in “culture of safety?” and expanded opportunities for patients to access mental healthcare.
Congratulations to these high achievers who work continuously to lead change and improve health care. Their unwavering commitment to excellence is why Keck Medicine of USC is among the nation’s leading health systems. That’s the Keck Effect.

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Los Angeles Business Journal

2020 TOP WOMEN IN HEALTH CARE

Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati
Keck School of Medicine of USC

Theresa Murphy
USC Verdugo Hills Hospital

Stephanie L. Hall
Keck Medicine of USC

Caryn Lerman
Keck School of Medicine of USC

Smitha Ravipudi
Keck Medicine of USC

Laura Mosqueda
Keck School of Medicine of USC

Stephanie L. Hall
Keck Medicine of USC

Mary Virgallito
USC Verdugo Hills Hospital

Shawn Sheffield
Keck Medicine of USC
LARA KHOURI
Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer
Children’s Hospital Los Angeles

Lara Khouri is responsible for leading several critical departments essential to the Children’s Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) mission, including strategic planning, health system development and integration, government, community and business relations, marketing and communications; and the cancer, neurological, orthopedic, cardiac and fetal & neonatal service lines. She has also worked closely with CHLA physicians to develop an expanded system of care for children in Los Angeles and beyond. Khouri also led a team responsible for the dramatic growth and performance management of the hospital’s delivery system across the continuum, from the more than 200 primary care pediatrics located in four counties in the CHLA Health Network, to the nationally-ranked, advanced care provided by the hospital’s key designated service lines. She has also overseen the growth of CHLA’s Global Health Program to serve hundreds of patients from six continents and 70 countries.

SARAH KILPATRICK, MD, PHD
Professor and The Helping Hands Chair
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Associate Dean for Faculty Development
Cedars-Sinai

Sarah Kilpatrick oversees 27 full-time faculty members specializing in high-risk pregnancies and complex gynecologic conditions. Her academic programs include Maternal Fetal Medicine (including prenatal diagnosis), Family Planning, Fertility and Reproductive Medicine, Gynecologic Oncology, and Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery. Dr. Kilpatrick also oversees quality and safety standards for more than 140 OB-Gyn physicians and directs diversity programs for Cedars-Sinai faculty of more than 450. She spearheaded the development and expansion of multidisciplinary clinical programs for women during and following pregnancy, including the Inflammatory Bowel Disease in Pregnancy Program, which features a unique clinic where expectant mothers consult simultaneously with a maternal-fetal medicine specialist and a gastroenterologist.

CARYN LERMAN, PHD
Director, USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center;
Associate Dean for Cancer Programs
Keck School of Medicine of USC

Caryn Lerman is the first female director of USC’s NCI-designated Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center (NCCOC). In this role, she provides the strategic vision to accelerate the NCCOC’s impact on reducing the burden of cancer in our ethnically and racially diverse catchment area of Los Angeles County and beyond. Through her work at the USC NCCC, Dr. Lerman has brought innovation, integration and diversity to healthcare. As a leader in Keck Medicine, she set forth a vision for patient-centered cancer care that leverages clinical, genomic, environmental and lifestyle information about patients to provide the most individualized and effective approaches to cancer prevention, treatment, and survivorship. For example, in the first 11 months of Dr. Lerman’s leadership, the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center launched the Target to Therapies program to transform laboratory discoveries into new cancer treatments, with multiple potential novel therapies in early stage drug development.

KELLY LINDEN
CEO
Providence Saint Joseph Medical Center

Kelly Linden became CEO of Providence Saint Joseph Medical Center almost three years ago. In her career, she has developed a strong background in operations, leadership, strategy and business development for healthcare providers, including hospitals and outpatient facilities. Among her areas of expertise is controlling operational costs through contract negotiations with suppliers and purchased services organizations and collaboration with the clinical and medical staff in utilization management and product standardization. She also brings to her work at Providence Saint Joseph her skills in staff engagement and collaboration. She has led a multi-million dollar complex campus development, including the construction of a new patient tower and has developed market strategies and physician alignment with providers serving diverse communities. Linden is also focused on growing key service lines including cardiovascular, cancer and orthopedics.

TOP WOMEN LEADERS IN HEALTH CARE

MARCIA LYSAGHT, DNP, RN
Associate Director for Patient Care Services and
Chief Nurse Executive
Greater Los Angeles VA

Marcia Lysaght has a span of control reaching more than 2000 FTEs, including disciples of nursing, social work, chaplain services, and sterile processing. She is a member of the executive leadership team for the Greater Los Angeles VA and is intimately responsible for quality care metrics, budgeting, strategic planning, policy creation, and professional development at all levels. Among her colleagues and those with whom she has worked, Dr. Lysaght is known a remarkable leader. Determined and decisive, she harnesses the ability to dissect a situation and provide meaningful suggestions but also has the ability to lead from a ‘bird’s eye’ perspective. She routinely engages in discussions and decisions that account for large-scale patient care services. As a servant but compassionate leader, she inspires her team members to grow, learn, and contribute professionally to themselves and to others through mentorship.

CHRISTINA MILLER, PHD
President and CEO
Mental Health America of Los Angeles

Christina Miller is president and CEO of Mental Health America of Los Angeles (MHALA), one of LA County’s largest and most comprehensive mental health organizations, providing integrated mental health services, medical care, wellness services, housing, employment, education and financial services, with special services for veterans and young adults. Since becoming MHALA’s CEO two years ago, Dr. Miller has led a strategic and cultural change process that has resulted in the integration of agency staff and services, a 30% increase in agency funding, the development of new functions such as private development and evaluation), and has expanded reach and support for the larger community. She has led the agency in new strategic direction with focus on resilience and quality of life, and special expansions in employment and youth services. She brings a breadth of mental health expertise from her work in inpatient, outpatient, community mental health, and nonprofit settings.

LORI J. MORGAN, MD, MBA
President & CEO
Huntington Hospital

Lori J. Morgan is the president and CEO of Huntington Hospital, a 619-bed, non-profit hospital in Pasadena. In her three years at Huntington Hospital, Dr. Morgan has brought her best-practice lens as both a physician and administrator to elevate care is delivered. She has fortified resources that support the patient experience and invest in programs that ensure quality outcomes. She is also leading the organization’s vision in expanding access to care across the continuum. Dr. Morgan holds a deep concern for all patients, especially those who are most vulnerable to a traumatic life situation or past experience. She implemented a trauma-informed care training for every employee in the hospital that recognizes and appropriately responds to patients who’ve experienced trauma to ensure the hospital is honoring the humanity in each person who seeks care.

LAURA MOSQUEDA, MD
Dean, Keck School of Medicine of USC; Professor of Family Medicine and Geriatrics; Director, National Center on Elder Abuse
Keck School of Medicine of USC

Laura Mosqueda is the dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, where she also serves as professor of family medicine and geriatrics, and professor at the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology. Dr. Mosqueda sets the vision for the Keck School of Medicine, with groundbreaking research, biomedical education and social justice. As dean, Dr. Mosqueda has strengthened internal and external community relationships at Keck School of Medicine. She created a new Office of Community Engagement, Office of Leadership and Wellness, Office for Social Justice, and the center for Gender Equity in Medicine and Science (GEMS). Dr. Mosqueda is internationally known in the field of elder abuse and neglect and continues to publish in this area. She is the principal investigator on an NIH-funded R01 project investigating the underlying mechanisms of elder mistreatment in people with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias.
Every award tells a story of a life touched by Prime Healthcare.

We are humbled, but what matters most is that each award reflects the dedication our doctors, nurses and staff have to each and every patient ... from Los Angeles to Rhode Island. It is through this tireless commitment that our friends and neighbors get better, feel stronger and live their best lives. That makes us proud. That makes us work harder. That makes us a family of professionals who strive for clinical excellence every day.

Prime Healthcare congratulates Dr. Kavitha Bhatia on receiving the Top Women in Healthcare Award from the Los Angeles Business Journal

Kavitha Bhatia, MD, MMM, FAAP
Chief Medical Officer of Strategy, Prime Healthcare
Chair, Prime Healthcare Foundation
TOP WOMEN LEaders IN HEALTH CARE

THERESA MURPHY, RN
Chief Nursing Officer
USC Verdugo Hills Hospital

Theresa Murphy is the chief nursing officer at USC Verdugo Hills Hospital, responsible for nursing services, quality and safety initiatives, and nursing professional development. Her interests include advancing nursing practice through the understanding of the California Nurse Practice Act, leadership development and organizational structures that support innovative care delivery. Murphy oversees the opening of the hospital's NICU. Under her watch, the hospital was designated a “Center of Excellence for Hip and Knee Surgery,” and the emergency department nurses were honored with the Lantern Award, one of the top awards for emergency nursing nationwide. Her leadership has contributed to a 65% reduction in patient harm events. She also advocates for nurses at the regional and state level through her board memberships. She takes mentorship seriously and volunteers to train emerging health care leaders.

LAURA PANCAKE, LCSW
Vice President of Clinical Services, Housing and Employment
Pacific Clinics

In 2018, Laura Pancake was promoted to vice president of clinical services, housing and employment at Pacific Clinics. In that role, she oversees mental health and supportive services including health navigation, wellness, housing, and employment. She is responsible for ensuring that mental and behavioral health, along with wraparound services, are of high quality and supportive of over 20,000 individuals each year. Last year, she served as the Executive Champion of LEADS Network, supporting the development of an employer resource group developed to support the LGBTQIA community. Pancake’s work on several research projects in collaboration with USC, as well as her psychosocial philosophy and work helping those who suffer from mental illness with employment opportunities has impacted the Southern California region. She understands the correlation between mental illness, homelessness and employment and works daily to offer solutions.

SHARON PETERS
Chief Administrative Officer
Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center

As chief administrative officer, Sharon Peters is leading a distinguished integrated healthcare delivery system for Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center; Kaiser Permanente’s largest tertiary and quaternary care hospital within the Southern California region. Peters is a health care executive with specific expertise in operational transformation. Her special interest is in quality and process improvement, so she is passionate about leadership and being a person of influence with a laser focus on creating the next generation of leaders within the enterprise. Another specialty for Peters is thriving in a labor and management partnership environment. Peters previously served as chief administrative officer for the Southern California Permanente Medical Group at the Kern County Medical Center, an integrated healthcare delivery system for Kaiser Permanente, where she led comprehensive ambulatory care services.

SMITHA RAVIPUDI, MPH
Chief Executive Officer, USC Care and Ambulatory Care Services
Keck Medicine of USC

Smitha Ravipudi serves as chief executive officer of USC Care and Ambulatory Care Services. She oversees the clinical practice group for Keck School of Medicine, inclusive of 1,200 providers. She is also responsible for clinical practice operations at Keck Medicine of USC’s ambulatory operations, community sites and the access center. Under Ravipudi’s leadership, USC Care has grown in volume and size, bringing care into new communities, while optimizing clinical assets at the main Health Sciences Campus. Highlights of Ravipudi’s work include the launch of the Toyota Sports Performance Center in El Segundo, a new sports medicine and athletic rehabilitation center that provides services to the Los Angeles Kings hockey team, youth sports teams and surrounding communities. Additional regional expansion efforts include multipurpose locations in Arcadia, and cancer services in Koreatown, Burns Park and Huntington Beach.

HELLEN RODRIGUEZ, MD
Medical Director for Maternal Fetal Medicine
Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center

Hellen Rodriguez has been practicing in the private sector for more than 30 years where she is well known as an educator and for her passion for quality care and safety in labor and delivery units. PVHMC, where she is the Medical Director for Maternal Fetal Medicine, has been a leader in the quest to improve maternal morbidity and mortality through multiple safety programs. She is the founder and director of one of the largest maternal transport teams in California and led the way in establishing one of the first Laborist programs in the West Coast. Dr. Rodriguez is a mentor in the California Quality Care Consortium. She is passionate about the use of simulation for improving outcomes and as the medical director of the Simulation Program has taken simulation out of the realm of obstetrics into the med-surg floors.

SHAWN SHEFFIELD, MBA, MHSA
Chief Strategy Officer
Keck Medicine of USC

Shawn Sheffield serves as chief strategy officer for Keck Medicine of USC. She oversees the development and execution of clinical strategic plans, mergers and clinical acquisitions, contracting/payor relations and marketing/public relations for the health system. She also manages Keck Medicine’s clinical affiliation relationships and other network partners. Since joining Keck Medicine in 2012, Sheffield has led an enterprise-wide strategic plan, leading to unprecedented growth and furthering the university’s goal of becoming a preeminent academic medical center. In less than ten years, annual system revenue has more than tripled, to $2.1 billion in 2019. Sheffield has personally led the mergers and acquisitions, brand expansion and network development activities that have led to this extraordinary growth. Sheffield led the acquisition of USC Verdugo Hills Hospital in Glendale in 2013, and created a plan to acquire outpatient surgery centers and oncology satellites throughout the region.

EILEEN SMITH, MD
Chief, Department of Hematology & Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation
City of Hope

In October of last year, Eileen Smith was appointed the new leader and chair of the renowned Department of Hematology & Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation at City of Hope, where she is leading the department into the next phase of translating revolutionary discoveries into life-changing treatments. Dr. Smith has a talent for bringing about transformative changes with the support of her patients, colleagues and City of Hope’s Enterprise Leadership Team (ELT). As a member of the ELT, Dr. Smith brings invaluable insight into the challenges of patient care and what’s needed to advance its mission. She educates her fellow ELT members about what it’s like to be a patient and a physician. In her new role as chair of the department, Dr. Smith provides oversight of all clinical treatments to improve outcomes for patients with leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, myelodysplastic syndrome and any other hematologic condition.

DARLENE SCAFIDDI, RN, MSN
Vice President, Nursing and Patient Care Services
Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center

Darlene Scafiddi has served the Nurses of Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center (PVHMC) as the chief nursing officer and vice president of patient care services for over 40 years, over which time PVHMC’s nurses have maintained a reputation for providing outstanding, uncompromising care to patients and community members. Under Scafiddi’s stewardship, PVHMC’s nurses work in collaboration with the patients, their families, the interdisciplinary staff and management team to produce the best outcomes for each patient that walks through the doors. Scafiddi values the role her team plays and contribution they continue to improve patient care and the lives of the community the hospital serves.

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SHAWN SHEFFIELD, MBA, MHSA
Chief Strategy Officer
Keck Medicine of USC

Shawn Sheffield serves as chief strategy officer for Keck Medicine of USC. She oversees the development and execution of clinical strategic plans, mergers and clinical acquisitions, contracting/payor relations and marketing/public relations for the health system. She also manages Keck Medicine’s clinical affiliation relationships and other network partners. Since joining Keck Medicine in 2012, Sheffield has led an enterprise-wide strategic plan, leading to unprecedented growth and furthering the university’s goal of becoming a preeminent academic medical center. In less than ten years, annual system revenue has more than tripled, to $2.1 billion in 2019. Sheffield has personally led the mergers and acquisitions, brand expansion and network development activities that have led to this extraordinary growth. Sheffield led the acquisition of USC Verdugo Hills Hospital in Glendale in 2013, and created a plan to acquire outpatient surgery centers and oncology satellites throughout the region.

EILEEN SMITH, MD
Chief, Department of Hematology & Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation
City of Hope

In October of last year, Eileen Smith was appointed the new leader and chair of the renowned Department of Hematology & Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation at City of Hope, where she is leading the department into the next phase of translating revolutionary discoveries into life-changing treatments. Dr. Smith has a talent for bringing about transformative changes with the support of her patients, colleagues and City of Hope’s Enterprise Leadership Team (ELT). As a member of the ELT, Dr. Smith brings invaluable insight into the challenges of patient care and what’s needed to advance its mission. She educates her fellow ELT members about what it’s like to be a patient and a physician. In her new role as chair of the department, Dr. Smith provides oversight of all clinical treatments to improve outcomes for patients with leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma, myelodysplastic syndrome and any other hematologic condition.

DARLENE SCAFIDDI, RN, MSN
Vice President, Nursing and Patient Care Services
Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center

Darlene Scafiddi has served the Nurses of Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center (PVHMC) as the chief nursing officer and vice president of patient care services for over 40 years, over which time PVHMC’s nurses have maintained a reputation for providing outstanding, uncompromising care to patients and community members. Under Scafiddi’s stewardship, PVHMC’s nurses work in collaboration with the patients, their families, the interdisciplinary staff and management team to produce the best outcomes for each patient that walks through the doors. Scafiddi values the role her team plays and contribution they continue to improve patient care and the lives of the community the hospital serves.

EILEEN SMITH, MD
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City of Hope

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Congratulations to our Top Women Leaders in Healthcare!

Jacqueline Bracy, MD, MHA
Gynecology

Melissa Howard, RN, MSN
Nursing

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Queen of the Valley Hospital, West Covina
Foothill Presbyterian Hospital, Glendora

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JOHNESE SPISSO  
President, UCLA Health, CEO, UCLA Hospital System, Associate Vice Chancellor of UCLA Health Sciences  
UCLA Health

JOHNESE SPISSO, president of UCLA Health, CEO of UCLA Hospital System and Associate Vice Chancellor of UCLA Health Sciences, is a nationally recognized academic healthcare leader. With more than 30 years of experience, she oversees all operations of UCLA's hospitals and clinics and the health system's regional outreach strategy. In her four years as a top leader of the UCLA Hospital System, Spiess has been instrumental in building a hospital system that employs 31,000 people and improves access to care. She has succeeded in bringing high-quality health care into communities around Southern California. UCLA Health's more than 180 clinics around the region recorded more than 2.8 million outpatient visits last year, and its hospitals reported more than 600,000 unique patient visits. Spiess is leading UCLA's push to provide convenient access to care closer to people's homes and focusing on providing the best possible patient experience.

SHARON THORNTON  
President, Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach Foundation and Long Beach Medical Center Foundation

SHARON THORNTON serves as president of MemorialCare's Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach Foundation and Long Beach Medical Center Foundation. The two foundations raise $10-15 million annually. In her role, Thornton oversees the fundraising activities for both hospitals, serves as the liaison between the hospital's administration teams and board of directors, and provides oversight for the development and implementation of strategy to strengthen and grow fundraising support. Thornton has more than 24 years of experience in development, and a background in law. From 1996 to 2000, Thornton was the director of planned giving at another MemorialCare entity, MemorialCare Saddleback Medical Center where she developed a marketing plan that significantly expanded the organization's gift pipeline.

MARIE TORRES, PHD, LCSW  
Senior VicePresident, Government Relations, Altamed Health Services

MARIE TORRES is senior vice president of government relations at Altamed Health Services, the nation's largest community health center, based in Los Angeles. She oversees advocacy, public policy, and legislative initiatives to protect access to health care services for vulnerable populations in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. One of Altamed’s biggest advocacy successes came with Cal-learn, a state-wide program providing intensive case management and supportive services to pregnant teens and mother-to-be to help them graduate from high school or its equivalent, become independent, and form healthy families. She has worked with CalOptima and the California Department of Health Care Services to change policy to help launch the Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) in Orange County.

MARY VIRGALLITO  
Associate Administrator, Quality and Patient Safety, USCH Verdugo Hills Hospital

MARY VIRGALLITO is the associate administrator for quality and patient safety at UCH Verdugo Hills Hospital. She directs quality improvement, infection prevention and control, licensing, and accreditation, and patient safety programs for USCH Verdugo Hills Hospital. Virgallito’s efforts have resulted in significant and rapid improvements in patient safety and quality rating scores within a three-year timeframe. Virgallito is currently hard at work managing the hospital’s response to the coronavirus. Due to her direction, USC-VH is a CDC-approved assessment center for emerging infectious diseases patients. She has implemented a no-touch and robotic cleaning practices to minimize risks to patients and staff. She was also the statewide representative for all California chapters of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology to the California Department of Public Health. She has implemented a no-touch and robotic cleaning practices to minimize risks to patients and staff. She was also the statewide representative for all California chapters of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology to the California Department of Public Health. She has implemented a no-touch and robotic cleaning practices to minimize risks to patients and staff. She was also the statewide representative for all California chapters of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology to the California Department of Public Health.

Initiatives to Close Health Care Workplace Gender Gap Earn Honors

HBA honors health industry companies proactively accelerating gender parity

The Healthcare Businesswomen's Association (HBA) late last year recognized Eli Lilly and Company, EMR Serono and W2O with 2019 ACE Awards for exemplary workplace initiatives that are working to close the gender gap and accelerate gender parity in the health care and life sciences industry.

The awards were presented on Tuesday, December 11, in conjunction with HBA’s Annual Conference at the Sheraton San Diego.

“EMR Serono’s Women in Leadership (W2O) was selected as a 2019 ACE Awards recipient for championing an innovative workplace program to help moms and dads transition back to work after parental leave. With data demonstrating that 43 percent of women make significant career changes and 50 percent of women take lower paying jobs in a family-friendly workplace after having children, W2O recognized there was an important opportunity to support its employees during one of life’s most common transitions. Through 65 percent of its leadership roles held by women, W2O is committed to cultivating a culture that supports women and working parents. “Your Fourth Trimester” has been extremely successful, with results showing that it has helped significantly cut the attrition rate at the firm. To date, 96 percent of parents who have participated in the program have returned to work at W2O. The 2019 ACE Awards honor companies that are committed to realizing the full potential of their female talent pool by fostering programs that deliver impactful and measurable results. Throughout the year, the honorees’ programs are showcased across the HBA’s extensive community of health care and life science companies and are sought out by their peers for insights.”

EMR Serono’s Women in Leadership, Lilly’s Women in Leadership at Lilly and W2O’s Your Fourth Trimester are the result of industry influencers who ‘get it’, and their initiatives demonstrate that gender parity is not just good for women, it’s good for business and the patients and clients we serve.

For 2019, EMR Serono’s Women in Leadership (W2O) earned recognition for accelerating an employee-initiated program that began with a conversation around gender imbalance and quickly evolved into part of a global-CEO sponsored initiative and the current health care strategy at Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. (EMR Serono is the biopharmaceutical business of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany in the U.S. and Canada.) Since W2O’s launch, the number of women in senior leadership positions within the company’s U.S. commercial division has more than doubled.

Lilly’s Women’s Initiative for Leading at Lilly (WILL) garnered honors for a multi-faceted initiative that not only has helped to accelerate women into management but was foundation-element is a strong MrmAll program that helps support WILL. The WILL organization grew last year by 40 percent to more than 2,400 employees.

W2O’s “Your Fourth Trimester” initiative was selected as a 2019 ACE Awards recipient for championing an innovative workplace program to help moms and dads transition back to work after parental leave. With data demonstrating that 43 percent of women make significant career changes and 50 percent of women take lower paying jobs in a family-friendly workplace after having children, W2O recognized there was an important opportunity to support its employees during one of life’s most common transitions. Through 65 percent of its leadership roles held by women, W2O is committed to cultivating a culture that supports women and working parents. “Your Fourth Trimester” has been extremely successful, with results showing that it has helped significantly cut the attrition rate at the firm. To date, 96 percent of parents who have participated in the program have returned to work at W2O. The 2019 ACE Awards honor companies that are committed to realizing the full potential of their female talent pool by fostering programs that deliver impactful and measurable results. Throughout the year, the honorees’ programs are showcased across the HBA’s extensive community of health care and life science companies and are sought out by their peers for insights.

The Healthcare Businesswomen’s Association (HBA) is a global not-for-profit organization dedicated to furthering the advancement and impact of women in the business of health care. With more than 50 locations throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe, the HBA serves a community of nearly 50,000 individuals and 147 Corporate Partners.

The HBA provides networking forums to build relationships and accelerate gender parity in the health care business. The HBA honors health industry companies proactively accelerating gender parity.