



# Interview With Kerry Major, MSN, RN, NE-BC

Roxane Spitzer, PhD, MA, MBA, RN, FAAN

**K**erry Major, MSN, RN, NE-BC, is the regional chief nursing officer for Cleveland Clinic Florida and the chief nursing officer for the Cleveland Clinic Hospital in Weston, Florida.

**RS:** Cleveland Clinic has such a fine reputation, and it is expanding significantly beyond the Ohio Borders. As the chief nurse of this system, what do you see as your major priority today?

**KM:** Our priorities for Cleveland Clinic in Florida are in alignment with the Cleveland Clinic enterprise. Cleveland Clinic's primary goal is to become the best place to receive care and the best place to work in health care. We want to create a best-in-class workplace for our caregivers and to continuously improve quality, safety, and the patient experience. We want to continue to enhance how we serve the unique needs of our communities within the region.

**RS:** How are you addressing this issue?

**KM:** High-quality, safe patient care is a top priority. We are implementing initiatives designed to promote quality patient care, caregiver wellness, expand our culture of safety, further develop and cultivate our leadership, and improve operations within the region.

One of the key initiatives that we have implemented in Florida, in alignment with the rest of the Cleveland Clinic health system, is the tiered huddle process. Tiered huddles are a series of focused discussions that occur every morning at every hospital across the region. These brief discussions occur through different tiers, creating open communication from our nursing teams all the way up to both local and health system executive leadership within a few hours. This allows the identification and escalation of the most critical information that requires attention at either the local or health system level.

The opportunity to share information throughout the organization and the region daily has provided a structure of more rapid response and support for our nurses, which in turn, improves the care we are able to provide to our patients.

**RS:** Who is involved in the process?

**KM:** The tiered huddle process is truly multidisciplinary in nature.

Tier 1—This huddle happens with caregivers throughout the organization at the unit/department level.

Tier 2—At this level, assistant nurse managers, nurse managers and directors huddle to discuss the issues of the day.

Tier 3—Nursing directors, directors from other hospital departments, chief of operations [COO], ACNO/CNO [assistant chief nursing officer/chief nursing officer].

Tier 4—Hospital president, COO, ACNO/CNO.

Tier 5—Information is escalated from the hospital executive leadership to the enterprise leadership. All hospital presidents, COOs, CNOs, and the executive CNO participate at this level.

Tier 6—Pertinent Information from every hospital in the enterprise is shared with the enterprise CEO and operations council.

Six tiers of management are able to share information within 4.5 hours—from the bedside nurse to our chief nursing officers, executive chief nursing officer, CEO, and other top-level executives (ie, quality and patient experience, IT [information technology], HR [human resources], operations). The tiered huddle process has created a clear, consistent, and efficient method to escalate daily challenges and provide timely support to caregivers. It has also provided a venue for leaders to quickly identify issues and work on resolutions in real time.

**RS:** What progress have you made, or what plans do you have to address this?

**KM:** Cleveland Clinic in Florida is comprised of 5 hospitals as of January 1, 2019. With quality and safety being the top priority, it was determined that implementation of the tiered huddle process as a mechanism to drive quality and safety would also be a top priority in our integration process. So much so, that the process was rolled out in all 5 hospitals within 30 days of initial integration.

As we continue to integrate, we are refining the huddle process, which was a completely new concept to the majority of the hospitals. This approach fits perfectly within our efforts to always do better. The most exciting part is that the process has been fully embraced, and the feedback at every level has been extremely positive. Caregivers feel that their concerns are being heard and

acted upon. They are amazed how quickly issues are being resolved, so that they can go back to focusing on patient care. The process has also empowered caregivers and leaders at each level to take ownership and resolve issues more quickly than ever before.

Huddles have also improved health system operations by providing a structure that supports a rapid response to issues or situations. The result is an engaged and empowered team of caregivers, working together to achieve issue resolution.

**RS: What have you learned that you could share with other nurse executives?**

**KM:** a) Integration is a process; it takes a committed team with clear communication and commitment. Processes, such as tiered huddles, provide a supportive framework that encourages this open communication at all levels of the organization. The result is a “team of teams” approach to problem solving, operational efficiency, and the provision of high-quality, safe care.

This process allows information to be shared in a safe and supportive environment, where everyone understands that the goal is to learn, grow, and improve. Caregivers are encouraged to be creative, to innovate, and are celebrated when they speak out or stop the line to try and prevent issues from occurring. The message to all is that setbacks can and will be worked through, using continuous improvement as the framework, and quality and safety as the end-result.

b) Though we are early in the process, it is very clear to me that integration can only be successful if you take the time to build relationships, build trust, and open the lines of communication. I am fortunate to witness this first hand with Cleveland Clinic’s Executive CNO Kelly Hancock, who has and continues to be an exceptional role model and leader. Being a CNO at a Cleveland Clinic facility a thousand miles away from the enterprise hub in Ohio, I have witnessed how essential communication is to integration, standardization, and a feeling of belonging. It is important to make time to connect with all of your leaders so they are able to receive guidance, advice, support, and clarification. Kelly has created a team that communicates well, even across the miles, which is what I am in the process of creating for the Florida region. She inspires us to be our best, and leverage communication and relationship building as tools to drive success. I hope to do the same.

c) When building a leadership team, it is crucial that everyone understands and is able to articulate the mission, vision, and goals. It is also important to help others recognize how their contributions make the mission, vision, and goals a reality.

**RS:** Thanks, Kerry, for taking the time to speak with me. I know you have a massive job ahead of you, but I couldn’t be more pleased that Cleveland Clinic is taking over my community hospital system. I know the nursing care under your leadership will be exceptional.

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