

## Reflections as Healthcare Administrators



2014 M-SEA Winner Reflections  
Lindsey Lehman, MPH, NHA  
August 15, 2017

Three days before receiving the Student Essay Award in early November, 2014, I accepted the opportunity to complete an Administrative Fellowship at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. As most of you know, Administrative Fellowships are based on the idea of a medical residency: we are all post-masters and rotate every 3-4 months to a new area of the organization. I consider this opportunity to be both my biggest accomplishment and greatest challenge.

During my first year in the fellowship program, I rotated through Research Administration, Management Engineering & Internal Consulting, Finance (Management Accounting and Revenue Cycle combined) and Health System Administration (which includes approximately 70 community clinics and hospitals in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa). This combination of rotations allowed me to see first-hand and begin to understand how the organization works from a ten thousand foot view. Within each rotation, I was responsible for a portfolio of projects: some lasting the duration of the respective rotation and some spanning up to twelve months. These projects ranged from assembling a comprehensive business plan, to coordinating an enterprise-wide (inclusive of our three destination sites in Minnesota, Arizona and Florida, as well as our health system) Ideal State Discharge workgroup and finding ways to implement zero-based budgeting models for our shared services.

In our second and final year, we often assume interim Operations Manager (or equivalent) roles. This provides a two-fold platform: a chance to meet organizational need and an opportunity to delve into a specific division and make a meaningful contribution. Armed with a vast organizational network and honed problem solving and project management skills, the interim experience tests our people management capabilities. While this was not my first time managing other people, it was the largest team I had been asked to directly oversee. Additionally, I would be managing a group of supervisors with one of the lowest cohort satisfaction scores in the institution.

Over the course of nine months, I managed day-to-day operations, including oversight of the appointment office, clinical assistants, medical secretaries, and nursing and advanced practice provider staff. I also helped establish strategic and action planning to enhance Midwest integration efforts for the Community Division of Pulmonary Medicine. Finally, I had the chance to co-lead a pilot program for calendar management, which reduced blocked/overbooked time by

a weekly average of ten percent. Across the country, organizations are focused on solving the access issues at hand and I enjoyed leading those efforts on a smaller, agile scale.

Moving straight through undergraduate, then graduate education, this interim opportunity was my first chance to gain full-time experience in health care management. Like many other academic medical centers, there are ample opportunities in Research, Education, Global Business Solutions, etc. and mid-way through my fellowship, I was struggling to articulate the next steps in my career. Within a few months of serving as an interim manager, my interest in clinical operations was solidified. Following this decision, I applied for and accepted an Operations Manager role within the Department of Medicine, Division of Endocrinology. I am currently supporting the thyroid, diabetes, pituitary-gonadal-adrenal (PGA) and community core groups. I will also maintain oversight of a large allied health team consisting of medical secretaries, patient appointment coordinators, clinical assistants and Endocrine Fellows and Residents.

As healthcare administrators, I truly believe that we have the opportunity to make or contribute to decisions that impact far more patients than any one clinician can hope to treat. This sentiment sparked my initial interest in pursuing a healthcare management and continues to guide me today. This also played a part in my selection of 'The Importance of Health Insurance Literacy' for the MOHEG student essay contest. At the time, I was working for the MedZou Community Health Clinic in Columbia, which focused on caring for uninsured or underinsured patients. This firsthand experience in attempting to help individuals gain coverage led me to pursue a second master's in Public Health, with a promotion and policy emphasis. I finished this degree during my fellowship and continue to pursue opportunities to educate myself and others where policy is concerned.

I am humbled to work for Mayo Clinic and grateful for the opportunity to complete the Administrative Fellowship Program. I'm finding it hard to believe that my time in the program is behind me and I'm excited for the opportunities ahead. I'm looking forward to being embedded in a specific division for more than twelve weeks and the opportunity to see projects through to fruition. During the fellowship, I often had to rotate out before completing a project: many times I was just one link in a long line of leaders spearheading the work. This perspective, however, allowed me to see the true value in communication and teamwork.

Throughout my time as a fellow, I was keenly aware of the fact that building relationships determines our capacity for success: relationships with patients, physicians, colleagues and staff. The old adage of 'people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care' is on point and advice that I now pass on to other emerging leaders. As young leaders, we often think of ourselves strictly as a mentee. I certainly have a lot to learn but also feel that I'm at a point where I have a lot to pass on, as well. I would encourage those who are early in their careers to find ways to become a mentor. Additionally, peer to peer mentoring can be equally valuable. At Mayo, we typically have eight to ten fellows in the program at one time and I often felt that I was learning just as much from a fellow fellow's experience, as my own.

These are a few of the many takeaways from my time as an Administrative Fellow and I hope that they resonate with some of you. I continue to be impressed with all that you're doing as the Missouri Health Executives Group and appreciate the opportunity to share what I've been working on since accepting the Student Essay Award.