

The MetroHealth System Board of Trustees

HEALTH EQUITY & DIVERSITY COMMITTEE REGULAR COMMITTEE

Wednesday July 31, 2024

1:00 – 3:00 pm

via In person & Zoom

Meeting Minutes

- Present:** E. Harry Walker, M.D., Maureen Dee, John Corlett-R¹, Sharon Dumas, Nancy Mendez, John Moss, Michael Summers
- Staff:** Christine Alexander, M.D., Ifeolorunbode Adebambo, M.D., Arlene Anderson, Peter Benkowski, Kate Brown, Doug Bruce, M.D.-R, John Chae, M.D., Kevin Chagin, Nabil Chehade, M.D., Joseph Frolic, Joseph Golob, M.D., Kimberly Green-R, Olusegun Ishamel, M.D., Barbara Kakiris, Srinivas Merugu, M.D., William Lewis, M.D., Charles Modlin, M.D., Connie Moreland, M.D.-R, Candace Mori, Alison Poullos, Marlon Primes, Aparna Roy, M.D.-R, Nagaraj Sarabu, M.D.-R, Dalph Watson, Darlene White
- Guest:** Guests not invited by the Board of Trustees are not listed as they are considered members of the audience and some were not appropriately identified.

Ms. Dee called the meeting to order at 1:13 pm, in accordance with Section 339.02 (K) of the Ohio Revised Code.

(The minutes are written in a format conforming to the printed meeting agenda for the convenience of correlation, recognizing that some of the items were discussed out of sequence.)

I. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 27, 2024, Committee meeting was approved as presented.

¹ R - Remote

II. Information Items

1. Health Equity Strategy Retreat Recap and MH Health Equity Steering Committee Launch - *Dr. Merugu*

The retreat focused on establishing a governance process and setting explicit goals for promoting equity, with around forty participants discussing current efforts, necessary organizational processes, and key definitions like equity and disparities. Presentations covered topics such as centers of excellence, community engagement, and aligning the quality and patient safety agenda with the equity mission. Breakout groups worked on defining equity, understanding the role in a complex system, and demonstrating progress, leading to a consensus on the future direction.

A key outcome was the creation of a Health Equity and Diversity Steering Committee, accountable to the board of trustees, to oversee and coordinate equity-related projects. Led by Dr. Modlin and Dr. Merugu, the committee will include subgroups for broad representation and focus on prioritizing and streamlining efforts. Discussions also stressed the importance of addressing the digital divide, engaging authentically with the community, collaborating with nonprofits, and using data to demonstrate the long-term benefits of interventions.

2. Health Equity Performance Update a. Lown Institute 2024 Rankings – *K. Chagin*

The presentation reviewed MetroHealth's improved ranking in the Lown Institute's social responsibility rankings, which emphasize equity, value, and outcomes in healthcare. In 2024, MetroHealth's ranking rose from 325th to 53rd out of 3,637 institutions, earning an A rating. The Lown Institute evaluates hospitals using publicly available data from 2019 to 2023, focusing on factors like pay equity, community benefits, inclusivity, avoiding low-value care, and patient outcomes.

MetroHealth's higher ranking is attributed to improvements in patient safety and satisfaction, reflecting the efforts of Dr. Golob and his team. The hospital's strong performance in these areas has enhanced its public image as a socially responsible institution.

b. Health Quality Update with Health Equity Data - *Dr. Golob*

The presentation focused on MetroHealth's commitment to high-quality, patient-centered care and efforts to reduce health disparities. It highlighted metrics for system goals, including patient care outcomes for different racial groups, with strong performance in cancer screenings and minimal differences in diabetic care, blood pressure management, and depression screening across racial groups. The importance of these metrics for patient health and reimbursement was emphasized. Efforts to address health equity were reviewed, showing minimal differences in readmission and mortality rates among different demographic groups. Improvements in patient experience, particularly in communication about medication, were noted, along with ongoing initiatives to enhance community access to healthcare. The speaker expressed confidence that MetroHealth is making significant progress in eradicating health disparities through continued focus on equity, quality, safety, and patient experience.

3. Health Equity Centers of Excellence - *Dr. Modlin*

Dr. Charles Modlin, Vice President and Chief Health Officer, presented MetroHealth's Multicultural Health Equity Centers, highlighting their alignment with the system's goals of improving patient outcomes, experiences, and reducing health disparities. The centers aim to address clinical disparities across all specialties and are part of MetroHealth's commitment to inclusivity and healthcare innovation.

Dr. Modlin and Dr. Charles Momon discussed health disparities affecting minority populations, particularly African Americans, in conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and prostate cancer. They emphasized the significant life expectancy gap in Cuyahoga County, attributed to social determinants of health and systemic issues like racism and implicit biases.

The Multicultural Health Equity Centers are designed to tackle these disparities by establishing specialized clinics in every department, with a focus on community outreach, health education, and improving access. The centers will be supported by tracking patient outcomes and increasing awareness both internally and in the community.

Dr. Modlin also addressed the need for a more personalized approach to patient care, especially in race-based medicine, and highlighted the potential life-saving impact of addressing healthcare disparities, referencing a 2003 Institute of Medicine study.

Additionally, MetroHealth is focusing on expanding the model to other specialties, like nephrology, where disparities are significant. The centers will use Epic's electronic medical records system for patient identification, ensuring equitable access without prioritizing Health Equity Center patients over others.

The presentation emphasized the importance of community engagement and tracking the impact of initiatives like health fairs, aiming to provide options for primary and specialty care at MetroHealth. As the U.S. minority population is projected to grow, addressing health disparities is crucial for the nation's health and economic stability.

Dr. Modlin concluded by discussing the ongoing efforts to establish these centers, focusing on the success of clinics like the Urology Minority Men's Health Center and the Multicultural Dermatology Center, and the strategic plan to expand and promote these initiatives.

4. Joint Commission and NCQA Health Equity Accreditation - *Dr. Modlin*
No report given.
5. Medical Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives - *Dr. Moreland*

Dr. Moreland emphasized the critical role of a diverse medical staff in improving healthcare outcomes, focusing on the importance of the doctor-patient relationship. She is committed to increasing diversity among physicians and providing training for underrepresented groups. Dr. Moreland presented data showing MetroHealth's diverse patient population, with 36% African American, 11% Latinx, and 49% white, but highlighted the lack of comprehensive demographic data on providers. Currently, 132 of 825 providers are from underrepresented backgrounds, including 48 African American and 18 Latinx. To address this, Dr. Moreland developed an interview process for department chairs to better understand diversity in recruitment and retention. Despite challenges, she is optimistic about achieving greater diversity and reducing healthcare disparities.

With no further questions from the Board members in attendance, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:20 pm.