



## PERSPECTIVES

# FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS

## *Looking Back at 44 Years in Health Care*

Thomas E. Beeman, PhD, Rear Admiral, USN (ret.)

**Editor's Note:** Most of our readers are probably not aware that Dr. Tom Beeman's vision is responsible for the existence of this Journal. That's why I asked him to write some final thoughts as he retires after a long and distinguished career, marked by 10 years as president and CEO of Lancaster General Health from 2005-2015. As I recounted in our 10th anniversary issue,\* soon after he arrived here in 2005 Tom asked me to develop an LGH medical journal. We were not aware of any independent community hospital that published an educational scientific journal filled with articles by its own non-academic staff, but Tom felt certain that the quality of our professional staff justified and could sustain it. Importantly, he gave us unconditional support and never attempted to influence the editorial content of the Journal.

After the merger of LGH with Penn Medicine, Tom stepped down as CEO of LG Health, and became COO of Regional Operations at Penn Medicine. In retirement, he will become executive in residence and teach at the Pennsylvania College of Health Sciences.

The nautical references in Tom's article reflect his long commitment to the U.S. Navy, exemplified by a leave of absence from LGH between October 2010 and July 2011, when he served as deputy commander for the National Intrepid Center of Excellence at the National Naval Medical Center, a facility for treatment of traumatic brain injuries. He retired from the Navy in 2016, having last served as assistant deputy surgeon general for reserve affairs.

He holds a PhD from Vanderbilt University, a master's degree in hospital administration from Widener University, a master's degree in health education and a bachelor's degree in community health studies from St. Joseph's University. He is the author of "Leading from Within" and many academic articles, including several in JLGH.

In reflecting on the past 44 years that have marked my life in health care, I cannot help but

think of the things I have left undone. Although it has been a profound privilege to serve the community by ensuring it has access to high quality health care, the experience has not been without its disappointments.

I wish I had used my voice more stridently on the issue of access. In America we should not be arguing about whether health care is a right or a privilege; in a first world society, it should be a fundamental principle that everyone has access to high quality, affordable health care. This does not mean unbridled, irresponsible, profligate access; it means access and affordability, consistent with the person's dignity as a human being in this country. We in health care should focus on these fundamental themes.

A second area is quality. Although we have focused a great deal on quality, we have not come up with definitions that everyone agrees on. Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health (LGH) is an institution that is five-star, Leapfrog A-rated, Truven top 100, and U.S. News and World Report ranked in nine specialties, which puts it among a handful of hospitals across the nation, but what does that mean for the consumer?

There is, of course, much to be proud of. For more than a decade, this excellent Journal has documented the many accomplishments of LGH's incredible medical staff. An accomplished board has partnered with the community on such projects as the Armstrong and Norfolk Southern properties' new buildings, PILOT payments, A Home in the City, and a breakthrough relationship with Penn Medicine, one of a handful of academic health systems at the apex of education, research, and clinical care in the world.

Sixteen physicians and five other leaders completed their MBAs in a cohort, and with other leaders are positioned to assist LGH to reach the

\* Bonchek LI. Our 10th year! A look back, with updates. J Lanc Gen Hosp. 2015 (Spring); 1: 1-3.

next level of excellence. The Pennsylvania College of Health Sciences has a new home to educate the health care providers and leaders of the future. Eight thousand physicians and staff are providing some of the best health care in the nation, and Jan Bergen, our CEO, moved into leadership seamlessly with her team, creating a new and fresh vision for LGH's role in the community and beyond.

The 44-year span of my career in health care

has passed like the blink of an eye; nothing can take away the privilege of having served with the LGH team, its board, medical staff, and employees who make Lancaster a better place because they do God's work here.

Thank you, and as we say in the Navy – you've got the "con."

Fair winds and following seas.

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Thomas E. Beeman, PhD, FACHE  
Executive in Residence  
Penn Medicine  
Rear Admiral, USN (ret)  
Pennsylvania College of Health Sciences  
840 Greenfield Road  
Lancaster, PA  
717-544-5134  
Thomas.Beeman@UPHS.upenn.edu

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**A Toddler's First Step into the Atlantic Ocean**  
Tybee Island, Georgia  
*Jean A. Korten*

Readers are invited to submit their scenic photographs to the *Journal*, which we may publish when space is available. Photos must be of high quality with a resolution suitable for printing.

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