



CEO Healthcare ROUNDTABLE

October 28, 2020 Webinar

“Impact on Leadership and the Challenges of COVID-19: Lessons Learned”

with Laura Kaiser, President and CEO of SSM Health



We are pleased to share the following summary of our CEO Healthcare Roundtable Webinar October 28, 2020 with **Laura Kaiser**, President & CEO of SSM Health

SSM Health is an \$8 billion not-for-profit Catholic health system located in St. Louis which operates 23 hospitals and 10 post-acute care facilities in four states. As a fully integrated system, SSM Health is also an owner of a 450,000-member regional health plan and a national PBM. Laura became President & CEO of SSM Health in 2017 after serving in a variety of leadership roles at Ascension and Intermountain.

Q: SSM Health has become a large, multi-state organization which has grown through a variety of strategies. Will the pandemic drive increased M&A activity in the industry?

Laura shared that SSM Health’s current strategy is focused on creating access to partners who add

value to healthcare delivery and unique expertise to SSM Health’s care delivery system. She noted that the future may focus less on M&A and more on synergistic partnerships in a variety of areas such as digital health

Q: Although we are facing a new wave, how do we successfully move from “response to recovery” with COVID-19?

Laura observed that we have not begun to focus on recovery quite yet due to the significant surge. However, there are several differences between the current surge and the pandemic’s early stages in March. Laura stated that we know significantly more about the virus and how to contain and treat it than we did in the early stages. SSM Health, like most organizations, has prioritized the need to stockpile supplies and protective equipment. She also stated that, in the beginning, each health system in St. Louis was trying to address the pandemic on their own. Now there is a broad, comprehensive St. Louis Metro Task Force which is meeting weekly to coordinate a community-wide response. All four of the St. Louis area health systems actively participate.

Q: Can you share any specific lessons learned to date?

Laura stated that it might have been helpful to create the Metro Pandemic Task Force and engage public health resources earlier in the pandemic to get a broader community-wide perspective. She also stated that the pandemic proved and continues to reinforce what we knew about health disparities. Laura shared her opinion that, at some point, we need a comprehensive national post-mortem on what we have learned as a nation, not just as individual states.

Q: What impact has the pandemic had on payer relationships?

Laura stated that the pandemic has created more willingness and increased opportunities to negotiate mutually beneficial value-based arrangements with payers. Laura also observed that the decision by payers to begin reimbursing telehealth visits is encouraging. She hopes reimbursement for telehealth will continue after the pandemic, as telehealth, in the long term, will prove not to be just a short-term replacement but a permanent alternative mode of care delivery.

Q: How has SSM Health maintained the engagement and morale of caregivers and other employees? What has the impact been on your personal leadership style?

Laura shared that her focus has been on “caring for the caregivers” and the challenges of bringing teams back together following furloughs and staffing changes. She expressed concern about the mental well-being of caregivers as the pandemic not only continues but spikes again. Laura shared that, although SSM Health lost significant amounts of money in March and April, a decision was made to still give merit increases to caregivers. She also expressed concern that as

the pandemic continues, our nation in general and local communities in particular, need to continue to emphasize that caregivers are the true “heroes on the front line.” Laura concluded by sharing that one of her personal challenges has been the impersonal nature of ZOOM calls and her inability to “make rounds” among employees and caregivers. Laura also shared that much of her career has been spent in “faith based” organizations which has helped to frame her values and leadership style. She stated that both her style and the culture of SSM Health has been severely tested during the pandemic but has not changed.

**TO VIEW THE OCTOBER 28, 2020
WEBINAR, CLICK BELOW**



Contact Alexis at Alexis@HealthcareRoundtable.com if you have questions about the Webinar.



Spring 2021 Roundtable Meeting

Be sure to hold the date on your calendar and watch for more details. *Hopefully, COVID will be behind us and we will be able to attend in person.*

March 3 - 5, 2021



Omni Scottsdale Resort at Montelucia

4949 Lincoln Drive
Scottsdale, AZ.

Topic and Speakers to be Announced

Marty Hauser

Facilitator, CEO Healthcare Roundtable

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