

Leader Profile



Latha Sivaprasad, MD, FACP, FHM

Senior Vice President and Chief
Medical Officer

Rhode Island Hospital/Hasbro
Children's Hospital



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Witt/Kieffer is proud to have served Rhode
Island Hospital/Hasbro Children's Hospital
in the recruitment of this executive.

Making Leadership a Lifetime Priority

Dr. Latha Sivaprasad has always had an interest in leadership. Even before high school, college and medical school, she took an interest in working with others to find creative solutions to problems. Today, as Chief Medical Officer of Rhode Island Hospital/Hasbro Children's Hospital – and as a practicing internist, associate professor in the Brown University's Warren Alpert Medical School, board member of the Rhode Island Medical Women's Association (RIMWA), and in other roles – she seeks to make a difference while leaving a positive mark on those around her.

Q: How did you first begin to see yourself as a leader?

Sivaprasad: I've always liked the idea of managing a team or group, and getting the output of collective wisdom. When I was young growing up, I participated for several years in Olympics of the Mind, a competition which presented teams with problems to solve together. You were tasked all year to devise solutions using creativity, teamwork, spontaneity, and other skills and then present your work at a series of competitions. Through activities like this and leadership opportunities in school I began to understand the idea of connecting people and ideas to achieve a greater outcome.

Q: Do you think leadership comes naturally to physicians, yourself included?

Sivaprasad: The framework for physician training positions you well to become a leader because it involves titrated and growing amounts of responsibility, focusing on a lot of detail initially and then having to make decisions at increasingly higher levels with relatively less data to work with. As physicians grow in their roles, they need training in skills that might not come so naturally, like understanding team performance, change management, and implementation science. Those three concepts are significant for physicians to understand.

I feel like relationship building and team performance have been natural strengths of mine. Over time I have worked to develop other areas of leadership—for example, to have a better understanding of how to integrate multiple agendas, or how to convey information to colleagues and staff more effectively. It hasn't always been easy, but I have learned to better use criticism to grow as opposed to getting hurt by it.

Q: What's the most daunting leadership challenge that hospital CMOs are grappling with today? What's been your response to it?

Sivaprasad: I think it is dealing with limited resources. In addition to overseeing medical staff activities, CMOs are becoming very integrated into operations and are critical to how dialogue unfolds on the financial side of the equation. There is a need for constant prioritization, for understanding the implication of not funding something, for being very deliberate in how important matters are packaged and discussed.

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Q: Have you developed your own principals or recipe for managing and leading others?

Sivaprasad: My recipe for how to manage would be as follows:

- Trust and instill trust.
- Don't micromanage.
- Ask for help.
- Don't oversimplify.
- Be nice, kind and respectful.
- Make sure people know where they stand and how they are performing.
- Stand behind your decisions but course correct if appropriate.
- Apologize if needed.
- Give credit to others.
- Have fun.

Q: As a prominent executive (and the first female CMO at Rhode Island Hospital), how do you strive to influence other women physicians and healthcare professionals?

Sivaprasad: I am in a privileged position to be able to influence women individually and in real-time, in my work and by serving on the board of the RIMWA – how women handle conflict, how they run meetings, how they package information to get something funded, how they balance their personal and professional lives . . . these are all things I try to work with other women professionals on. Meanwhile, I constantly learn from women who had to pave the very path I walk.

My medical school class was fifty percent female, and I don't believe my gender has been an obvious barrier. I've had both wonderful male and female role models, but not every woman has that same experience. Unless we all take a proactive role to make sure there truly is equal opportunity and equal growth, progress will be slow.

Q: Please complete the following phrase: "Good leadership requires . . ."

Sivaprasad: Humility, focus, persistence, grit, empathy, humor and knowing when to exercise authority.

Q: Finally, what's the best career advice you've ever gotten?

Sivaprasad: I repeatedly refer to a story an executive in New York City told me several years ago: In every situation you are either the egg or the rock. If you are the egg, no matter how strong or correct you are, the rock will always win if you go head to head. This helps me in some situations where I might not be able to simply exercise authority, like a rock, and need to pause and figure out how to strategize or utilize energy differently if I want a different outcome.

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