

A campus newspaper for faculty, staff and students at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

Q&A with Brent King, M.D., Interim EVP and COO

By Pamela Lewis, *Institutional Advancement*

The Leader editor met recently for an interview with Brent King, M.D., interim executive president and chief operating officer, about, among other things, the changes in his professional life and how his new challenges are giving him new ways of looking at the UT Health Science Center at Houston.

Q: Going from head of emergency medicine to interim executive vice president and chief operating officer seems like an unusual career move. Can you give me a look at how this all came about?

A: In Pennsylvania and here I have been heavily involved in administration. That's where my career's been moving; it's what I've been training myself to do.

I worked extensively with Mike McKinney (former chief operating officer). I kind of shadowed Mike for the last couple of years. I wasn't involved with everything he was involved in, but with a lot of it. He and I met regularly and talked. Mike said to me a little while ago, "If I ever go anywhere, I'd like you to consider taking my place." I thought I had a long, long time to think about that ... but I didn't.

Q: Similarities and differences between running an emergency department and doing this job?

A: One of the real demands of emergency practice is being adaptable; you really don't know what's going to come at you at any given moment. That's really good preparation, and as an emergency physician, I clearly understand the concept of triage — in the ED you look at patients, and in this job you look at problems and figure out which ones need to be addressed first, based on their likely impact. I'm used to making important decisions based on limited

information when necessary.

Q: How would you describe the duties of this job as it is now?

A: Well, I'm still getting to know all the ins and outs. We are a very large organization and we have operations at a variety of levels. It's really my responsibility, along with Kevin Dillon (executive vice president, finance and administration), to figure out how to effectively manage the various aspects of this large enterprise.

Q: What do you see as your biggest challenges in this position and why?

A: We clearly have a lot of important things out there that need our attention.

Compliance is critically important.

So is the increasingly complicated management of the practice plan at the Medical School, and the Dental Branch practice plan will add to that as well.

We are currently in the midst of a fairly radical change in the way that the MS practice plan is managed through AMS (our partnership with the Harris County Hospital District).

In addition, all of us every day are thinking about what it will take to continue to create the kind of institution we will use to train the next generation of dentists, nurses, scientists, physicians that will be needed to make the discoveries and provide the care for Houston and Texas.

Q: What do you see as your biggest opportunities and why?

A: You need look no further than the IMM and the Faye S. Sarofim Research Building, which we are beginning to fill with scientists.

The Medical School's new Replacement Research Facility is about to come online. And things are starting to pick up on the

South Campus. Our Dental Branch is going to be rebuilt there, as well as the Center for Advanced Biomedical Imaging and Research building and other facilities.

I see a big boom in our research capabilities over the next several years. Likewise we are going to increase education efforts in every one of our schools.

Not yet on tap, but we will have to get

into it soon, is the education of the professional. We have reached the point where discovery is really driving the change in the body of knowledge necessary to effectively practice everything. So there is a real risk of knowledge obsolescence.

We are just about to bring online our new Surgical and Clinical Skills Center, which means we will be well positioned to be a provider of choice for continuing education for the professional. We are using the clinical component now; the surgical component is almost ready to go. There, also, we will train students, residents, nursing professionals. We will see it grow as a training venue for physician/nurse teams.

Q: How would you describe your management philosophy?

A: I tend to approach most things fairly collaboratively. My main focus over the next several weeks is going to be hearing from people at all levels in the institution, about what we are doing and what they



Interim COO Brent King with senior executive assistant Yolanda Torres. Photo by Pamela Lewis

think we should be doing.

I've asked Yolanda (Torres, his assistant) to set up lunch meetings with line faculty, core personnel. I want to hear what they say about how things are going, what they like, what they don't like.

I think that the organizations that function best have a very strong, cohesive culture, and I want to help strengthen the UT Health Science Center at Houston to be a place where all of us would be happy working.

Q: What's been the most enjoyable part of the job so far?

A: Meeting the people throughout the institution. There are so many really impressive folks who work here. It was hard to understand that, just being on the Medical School faculty and being a department chairman at one school. At that point I didn't know a lot of people or a lot about the really interesting efforts taking place around campus. ★

Mentors Recognized with President's Awards at Committee on the Status of Women Banquet



John H. Byrne, Ph.D., left, faculty mentor award recipient with nominator Ruth Heidelberg, Ph.D., said he tries to provide opportunities for all faculty, students and staff to excel and then "get out of their way."



Paula O'Neill, Ed.D., right, administrative and professional award recipient with nominator Rebecca Lopez.



Virginia Q. Wall, right, department of Pediatrics social work supervisor and classified staff mentor award recipient, with her mother, Lucy Alvarez, who, Wall said, "has mentored me to be the person I have become. She has taught me everything I know about how to do what I do."

Photos by Ester Fant

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To Your Health, the UT Health Science Center Wellness Fair

The UT Health Science Center Wellness Fair will give our more than 8,000 students, faculty and staff members access to a variety of health-related information and activities. Included are glucose, blood pressure, cholesterol and vision screenings among others that may be available. For fun, get a power chair massage and perhaps pick up a door prize.

The Wellness Fair takes place, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 17, in the Medical School Building's Leather Lounge and basement area.

The Wellness Fair is sponsored by UT Counseling & Work Life Services, Auxiliary Enterprises Recreation Center, UT Health Services-Medical Center & Pearland, UT Physicians, Environmental Health and Safety, and the Office of Institutional Advancement.



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