Why these 2 health systems are among nation’s top workplaces

JUL 14, 2022

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The excellence of the care delivered to patients by Atlantic Health System and Baptist Health South Florida has been well recognized by publications such as *U.S. News and World Report* and others. Both are also consistently named among the best places for their employees and staff to work.
Atlantic Health System joining team members in celebrate the system being named to Fortune’s 100 Best Companies to Work For list. The two organizations—both members of the AMA Health System Program—made Fortune magazine’s “100 Best Companies to Work For” list this year. For Baptist Health, based in Coral Gables, it was their 22nd time on the list. Atlantic Health, based in Morristown, New Jersey, has made the list 14 times in a row.

Fortune notes that 57% of employees at a typical U.S. company say they work at a great company. For Atlantic Health, it’s 85% and, at Baptist Health South Florida, that figure is 83%.

Here are some other statistics for Baptist Health South Florida:

- 92% of the system’s 24,000 employees said they “feel good about the ways we contribute to the community.”
- 91% said: “When you join the company, you are made to feel welcome.”
- 89% said: “I’m proud to tell others I work here.”

For Atlantic Health:

- 91% of the system’s 18,100-person team said: “I’m proud to tell others I work here.”
- 91% also said: “I feel good about the ways we contribute to the community.”
- 91% said: “When you join the company, you are made to feel welcome.”

The AMA Health System Program provides enterprise solutions to equip leadership, physicians and care teams with resources to advance programs and help drive the future of medicine. Learn more.

**More autonomy means more empowerment**

Supporting Atlantic Health’s 4,800 affiliated physicians and other members of the front-line clinical team is a way to differentiate the system from competitors because doing well by team members would translate into better care for patients, according to Nikki Sumpter, Atlantic Health’s chief administrative officer.

“This has been a real journey for Atlantic Health over the last 14, 15 years of trying to make sure that we have a workplace where our entire team could come to work and feel valued and supported to be able to do the mission-critical work that they were trained to do,” she said.

Steven Sheris, MD, Atlantic Health’s executive vice president and chief physician executive, agreed.
“Atlantic Health has realized that the best health systems, those that deliver the best outcomes, create a team-based culture that empowers everybody on the care team,” said Dr. Sheris, who is also president of the Atlantic Medical Group.

“Our physician community realizes that they can’t do it alone,” he said. “And that’s really what the secret sauce is for Atlantic’s success—how we empower everybody to really be at their best professionally and provide the resources that our team members need to grow professionally.”

This sense of being empowered and making people feel valued has paid off during the pandemic.

“What made us great before COVID has enabled us to get through COVID—we could not have succeeded without the culture of trust and empowerment that we cultivated in the years prior to COVID,” Dr. Sheris said.

“We really prioritized two things: patient safety and teammate safety,” he said. “We didn't dictate down to the site of care delivery what to do. We just said: 'We trust you. Tell us what you need—we'll get it for you.'”

Evidence of how well this strategy worked, according to Dr. Sheris, was how the system was able to go from 14 telehealth visits a week to 14,000 in a matter of days.

“We returned autonomy to the physician practices, and we said: ‘Figure out how you need to see your patients and we will configure the systems to help you see those patients,’” he said. “So how do you restore some element of control when everything is out of control? You give people the ability to innovate and to create solutions.”

Dr. Sheris said Atlantic Health’s keys to reducing physician burnout include improving workflows and removing unnecessary processes.

“We revise processes that don’t add value,” he said. “I'm a big proponent of looking at our systems and processes to make decision making more agile.”

While about 75% of Atlantic Health’s labor force has been with the organization for less than 10 years, *Fortune* notes that 9% have worked for the organization for more than 20 years.

“We have some folks who’ve been here 50 years—that doesn’t happen by accident,” Sumpter said.

**Destigmatizing mental health care**
Ana Viamonte Ros, MD

Baptist Health South Florida has similar statistics, with 71% of employees having a tenure of less than 10 years, while 8% have been working there for more than 20 years.

According to *Fortune*, 13% of employees have been with the system for 11–15 years. That includes the organization’s first chief well-being officer, Ana Viamonte Ros, MD, MPH, who has been with Baptist Health South Florida for 12 years working as medical director of palliative care and bioethics.

“At meetings, when people identify or introduce themselves, they'll say: ‘I've been here 35 years, I've been here 42 years,’ and I’m thinking: Holy moley, someone's doing something right or people wouldn’t stick around for that long,” she said.

Dr. Viamonte Ros previously served as state’s first surgeon general and led the Florida Department of Health from 2007–2011.

In her new role, she leads the organization’s initiatives to make mental health wellness and overall well-being a priority. It will include developing a systemwide strategy and support to help all Baptist Health physicians, clinicians and employees facing stress, anxiety, exhaustion and depression.

“Baptist really recognized the importance of solidifying and aligning all of our efforts, and they created what is now our well-being department to take a holistic approach to address the physical, emotional, social, spiritual and financial well-being of our health care workforce,” Dr. Viamonte Ros said.

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“Baptist recognized how important it was to destigmatize and normalize mental health services,” she said. “Our leaders have stepped up as role models to say: ‘I’ve gone to seek help and this was very helpful to me.’ I urge all the people who report to me to do so as well.

“We all need help at some point. There’s no stigma,” Dr. Viamonte Ros added. “Are you weak because you need this? No. On the contrary, you’re courageous and you’re brave to recognize that you need help and to seek it out.”

Baptist Health South Florida provides staff with access to family and marriage counselors and has started “mental first-aid” training to develop “on-the-ground champions for well-being” to support colleagues who are going through rough times, Dr. Viamonte Ros said. This includes co-workers being able to gift personal time off days to colleagues who could benefit from extra time off.

Exercise, education and meditation programs are also available.

While she knows these programs are valuable, Dr. Viamonte Ros acknowledges what fuels burnout in many physicians: burdensome EHR systems—and she is working with the system’s informatics experts to remove some of the pain that EHRs can create.

“Physicians did not go to medical school to be documenting the whole day and filling out insurance forms—they want to see patients,” she said. “We have to recognize that no amount of meditation and resiliency training will undo some of the onerous administrative obstacles that are out there that interfere with physicians being able to practice.”