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HEALTH CARE

Broward Health CEO Shane Strum on leading through a pandemic



Broward Health CEO Shane Strum
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Amid the ongoing threat of Covid-19, South Florida's health care systems continue to lead in the fight in the region to lower infection and death rates.

As one of South Florida's largest and oldest public health systems, Fort Lauderdale-based Broward Health positioned itself as a key player in efforts to care for the sick and encourage education about Covid-19 across its 30 locations countywide. The system joined with federal, state and local partners to expand access to services such as Covid-19 screenings and telehealth offerings.

The hospital system also ushered in new leadership. Shane Strum, former chief of staff for Gov. Ron DeSantis, stepped into the role of CEO in March at a time when Covid-19 cases had drastically declined in the region. However, an uptick in cases caused by the deadly Delta variant has hospitalizations on the rise again.

“When I joined [Broward Health] a few months ago in the spring, everything was running well and people were catching their breath,” Strum said. “But that quickly changed this summer.”

Here, Strum discusses his journey with Broward Health so far, and his hopes for the hospital system:

What's the most significant takeaway from your first six months as CEO of Broward Health? I'd say the dedication of our caregivers. I do a lot of rounds here where I walk around to each of the units so I can see what's happening firsthand. People are tired and fatigued, but they're stepping up to do everything that they can. I'd also say Broward Health has been on the front lines with our Covid-19 testing and vaccination sites. We had one of the largest vaccination sites in the county that vaccinated over 115,000 folks at our own expense. We probably incurred about \$1 million [in expenses] per month to run those vaccination and Covid testing sites, which we believed was the right thing to do.

What's the status of Broward Health's capacity amid the recent surge in Covid-19 cases due to the Delta variant?

We're close to capacity, but we've already surged. Typically, about 25% to 30% of the daily census is Covid patients, and the rest are those who are seeking critical care. That's what's driving high capacity across all the health care systems in Florida. It was almost a perfect storm. Broward Health started an advertising campaign to tell people that they needed to come back for critical services. Then, once people started to come back to the hospital to see their physicians, Covid reared its ugly head again. But we've got the playbook, and we're prepared.

How has Broward Health been affected by the current shortage of health care workers? It's all hands on deck.

We're having all sorts of issues with this labor shortage because our doctors, nurses and respiratory therapists are working double overtime and they're tired. They've been fighting this battle for 18 months. We've done things to help reward them, including shift differentials and bonuses. We're paying travel nurses about three times what we'd usually pay because they're so in demand in Florida and across the country. Our labor costs are through the roof, but it's the right thing to do.

What are some of the long-term growth plans for Broward Health that you're excited about? Broward Health is

extremely fortunate to have valuable parcels of real estate. We're currently evaluating what we will do in the future with all of those opportunities as we continue to grow our footprint on each of the campuses. We also want to expand our training, technology and trauma services:

- We've recognized and anticipated this physician shortage for years. As a health care organization, we can focus on the shortage that is facing our region and the rest of the nation.
- We've been implementing the latest technology to provide more optimal outcomes for our patients. We're looking at

the latest things we can do with robotics at each of our hospitals. We'll also soon be launching our eICU, where we'll monitor all of our ICU patients with integrated support from artificial intelligence.

- We'd like to expand our Level I trauma center. We want to be your hometown hero and the place where you would take anyone who was in a horrible emergency or accident.

Has leading employees through the pandemic changed your leadership style? As a CEO, you're always running in a million different directions. But now, I'm meeting and listening more to all of the employees. I've spent a lot of time asking [staff] about the critical things they need, and I learn so much from them. The pandemic has reaffirmed my belief that people are your greatest asset.

What is your proudest accomplishment so far? Making rounds every single day and going to all the hospitals. I'm incredibly proud of how the team has handled the pandemic and leaned in. Everyone here has gone above and beyond. It doesn't matter which department they work in at Broward Health; they care about the organization and they're rolling up their sleeves. It gives me great hope for what we can accomplish as a system once we exit the pandemic.

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