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## An Interview with George J. Brown, MD, Chief Executive Officer of Legacy Health System

George J. Brown, MD is the Chief Executive Officer of Legacy Health System with facilities in Oregon and Washington State. Prior to assuming this position in August 2008, Dr. Brown was the Chief Operating Officer of Washington State based MultiCare Health System. David Peel, Publisher of the Washington Healthcare News, asked Dr. Brown a few questions in this January 2009 interview.

*What were some of the reasons you accepted this new position?*

The main reason for accepting the position was the challenge of leading a successful and growing healthcare system. Legacy is committed to providing the highest quality medicine and serving a broad community, and I am proud to be a part of this team. The system also has a long, illustrative history, and I felt that it would be an honor to be a part of that history. I was also attracted to living in Portland because it is a vibrant community with a great deal to offer my family and me.

*How are you adjusting to the CEO position, given your longstanding role as the Multicare COO.*

For me, there has not been much of an adjustment for two reasons.

First, the positions of COO and CEO have many similar duties, and in some cases, the two posi-



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George J. Brown, MD  
Chief Executive Officer  
Legacy Health system

tions share a number of responsibilities. Second, I have already served as a CEO before during the course of my military career. The lessons I learned during my mili-

tary career continue to apply in my role here at Legacy Health System. I have learned that it is important for a leader to be adaptable and flexible to meet challenges as they arise, and it is important to think strategically about the future. I believe those are both key to the success of any organization.

*What are the key differences between the Oregon healthcare system and the Washington healthcare system?*

I have found there are more similarities than there are differences between Washington and Oregon. Part of the reason that is so clear to me is because Legacy Health System serves communities in both Oregon and Washington. Legacy Salmon Creek Hospital and its supporting operations serve the people of Vancouver, Washington, so Legacy is acutely aware of the environment in both states.

One difference in Oregon this year is a major push to address the healthcare needs of children. The state Legislature is considering a specific tax on healthcare providers to help fund healthcare for the uninsured, with a specific focus on children. An-

other difference that I have seen between Oregon and Washington is the distribution of the population in the state, with the Portland metropolitan area serving as the major population center. Consequently, the rural areas of Oregon are sparsely populated, which makes it challenging for hospitals serving those areas.

*What are the three main things you plan to accomplish at Legacy during the next five years?*

First, I want to continue the strong foundation of patient safety and quality. Legacy has made significant strides in these key areas, and I want to continue to see gains and improvements in these areas. We have been working with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and Dr. Jim Reinertsen on setting and achieving what we call our “Big Aims” in patient safety and quality.

Second, I want to continue to develop and expand our Centers of Excellence in our various hospitals. These areas currently include our trauma program at Legacy Emanuel Hospital, the Oregon Burn Center, and Legacy Emanuel Children’s Hospital. Other areas where I want to see growth and development include our cardiovascular program, our neurosciences program, oncology, ophthalmology and our women’s services program. These are all key programs where I see Legacy able to be the leader in the community.

Finally, I think it will be critical for Legacy to survive these tough economic conditions as a strong organization. We have to be both effective and efficient with the resources we have. My goal is to ensure Legacy is able to emerge on the other side of this recession as a healthy and viable competi-

tor in the markets we serve.

*What other important information should our readers know about you and Legacy Health System?*

I am proud of the fact that Legacy Health System is the oldest non-profit healthcare provider in Oregon. One of the founding hospitals in the system has been serving patients for more than 130 years. Legacy has a strong connection to the community, with long associations with the Episcopal and Lutheran churches. It continues to grow and develop as a community-based healthcare system with the support of the Portland and Vancouver metropolitan areas. I know that everyone in the system is driven to provide the best possible healthcare for the patients and the communities we serve.

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