



Expert Insights From **Barry Slotnick, Executive Director at Wachusett Healthcare**

As a new year gets underway, Barry Slotnick, Executive Director at Wachusett Healthcare, looks back as he plans for the future. His visionary spirit, insights and energy make it clear that he and his team will find success even as they navigate challenges in the new year.

Transforming Challenges into Opportunities

Staffing continues to be a challenge, but partnerships and other efforts are having a positive impact. For instance, Slotnick is working with trade schools that are starting CNA programs to try and build the future in that area. He also has built an organizational culture that promotes care, compassion, and empathy for residents and staff alike. "Working in this field is hard, and we are grateful for the people who choose this line of work and are committed to providing the best possible care for our residents," he said.

Strengthening the bottom line is a key determinant of success, and it also supports the organization's ability to provide great care and quality of life for its residents. To ensure this strength, Slotnick said, "We meet on a weekly basis as a company and look for opportunities for revenue generation and waste reduction." He noted that such efforts enable organizations to get and keep their heads above water over time, even when conditions and situations – such as a natural disaster or a pandemic – threaten fiscal health.

More than ever, Slotnick noted, partnerships with area hospitals and other facilities, as well as organizations such as PharMerica, help to increase efficiencies and

enable growth. At the same time, he said, investing in people – through everything from benefits to a healthy working environment – helps "build your bench" and contributes to sustained success and organizational viability.

All of this is significant as closures challenge the remaining facilities to take in more residents and provide an array of care and services – including efforts such as ventilation, wound management, and dementia care. As Slotnick explained, "About 15 facilities have closed in the state of Connecticut, and we have the fifth highest elder population in the country. We are at 100% occupancy, something we haven't seen in a while." Investing in people and the quality that comes from talented, engaged, and consistent staff is helping Slotnick and his team to meet this growth with quality.

Quality in Action

Slotnick understands the value of data analysis and quality improvement. "We collect data and review the numbers on a regular basis, and we constantly look for opportunities for quality improvement," he said, stressing that information is shared with staff and others so they can see what is happening and participate in innovations and positive change. He observed, "I want them to see where we're at, what we're working on, and what

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Expert Insights From **Barry Slotnick, Continued**

we're committed to accomplishing." He stressed, "We have created a culture where data matters, and people embrace it and use it to benefit our residents and our organization. When you do this, people start to look at things a bit differently and work together to be part of the solution."

Best Practices and Beyond

Slotnick and his team embrace innovation, and this has led to best practices. For instance, when there is an admission, the new resident's chart is brought to the morning report and reviewed for accuracy. This includes looking at medications and orders for therapy and other interventions. This gets staff engaged with residents in the first 24 to 48 and gives them an opportunity to identify and address challenges and issues. "These efforts go a long way with residents and families," he explained, and they reinforce for staff that they are key members of the care team.

While quality improvement focuses on challenges, gaps, and issues, Slotnick emphasized the need to celebrate successes with staff. When they hit 100% occupancy, for instance, leadership brought in food and balloons and shared the milestone with staff, residents, and families alike. Elsewhere, Slotnick and his team celebrate 'No Fall Friday,' recognizing every building that has a fall-free record. He observed, "It's extremely important to share those kinds of things and recognize the good that is being done. Then when there are unforeseen challenges or issues, I think people are more open to listen and work on solutions."

Like PharMerica and its team, Slotnick values his role as a leader in the local community and the opportunity to serve his neighbors and their families on a daily basis. "We need to be part of the community and get to know the people who live and work here," he said, adding that this goes a long way to building partnerships and helping people to see his facility as a place that provides quality, person-centered care.