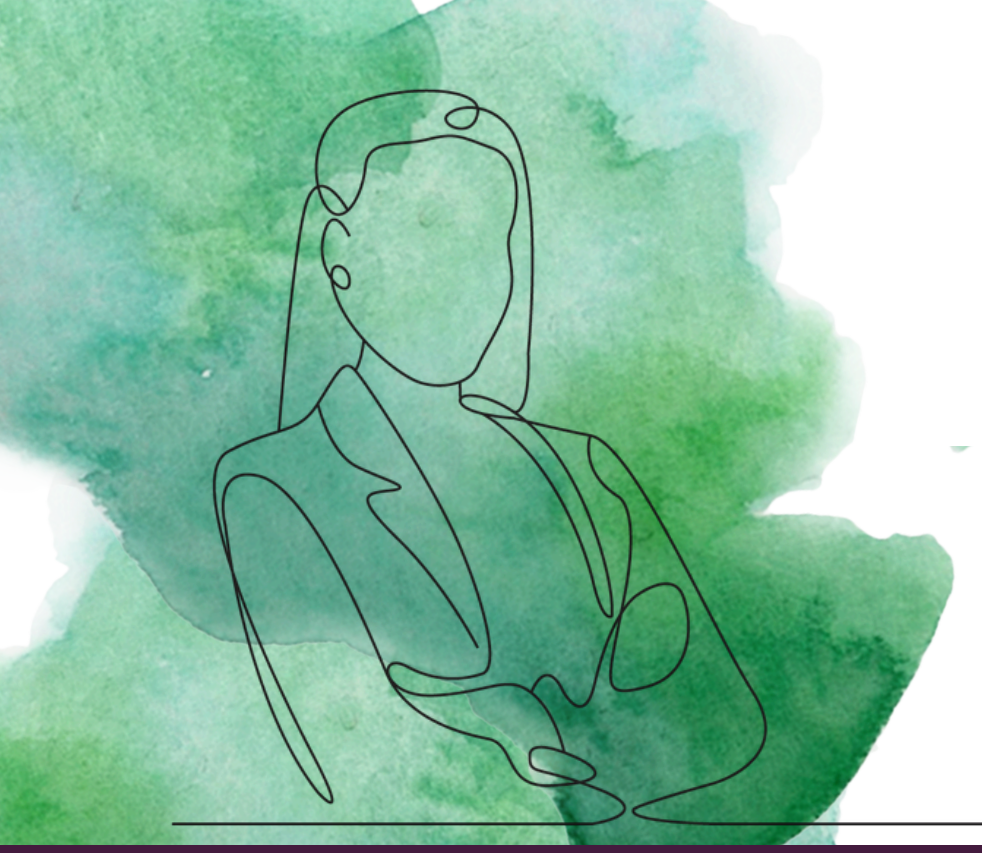

RUDISH HEALTH

Leadership Profile

Vice President of
Care Transitions and Throughput

LEE HEALTH

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Position	Vice President of Care Transitions and Throughput
Organization	Lee Health
Location	Fort Myers, Florida
Website	www.leehealth.org

Opportunity

Lee Health, a premier $4B integrated hospital and health care delivery system in sunny Southwest Florida, is seeking a highly qualified care continuum leader as its next Vice President of Care Transitions and Throughput.

Reporting directly to the enterprise EVP/COO of Acute Care and Nursing, this executive is accountable for optimizing care coordination, discharge planning, and patient throughput across the continuum of Lee Health's acute and post-acute care sites. The Vice President works in close collaboration with clinical and operational leaders to implement strategies that reduce length of stay and improve capacity management and discharge efficiency systemwide.

The immediate priority is to understand current state workflows and build the relationships necessary to lead through influence, while establishing greater structure, discipline, and consistency across care transitions for all points of entry to the network. Success will be measured by tangible improvements in patient flow and length of stay, including the O/E ratio. The VP will position the transfer center in the longer term to use business intelligence tools (such as Qventus) for real-time capacity planning.

The ideal candidate is an influential leader who partners credibly with entity nursing and operations executives and who thrives in a highly visible role to captain an enterprise care continuum strategy aligned with Lee Health's transformation priorities.

Lee Health

Lee Health began in 1916 when community leaders built the first hospital in Fort Myers. Today, the health system comprises acute and specialty hospitals, skilled nursing units, urgent care centers, pediatric facilities, outpatient clinics, and a home health agency, with more than two million total patient contacts a year.

Locations

Acute care hospitals

- Lee Memorial Hospital: 336-bed hospital, with Lee Health Fort Myers Campus opening in 2028 (read more here)
- HealthPark Medical Center: 326-bed hospital
- Cape Coral Hospital: 303-bed hospital
- Gulf Coast Medical Center: 699-bed hospital
- Golisano Children's Hospital: 135-bed pediatric hospital

Skilled nursing units and facilities

- Lee Memorial Hospital Skilled Nursing Unit: 18 beds
- Gulf Coast Medical Center Skilled Nursing Unit: 75 beds
- Skilled Nursing Facility HealthPark Care Center: 112 beds

Additional assets

- Eight outpatient services centers and two pediatric specialty clinics
- Five urgent care locations
- Two rehabilitation hospitals in partnership with Encompass Health
- Specialty service line institutes in cancer, heart, musculoskeletal, and digestive health, and wellness services
- Lee Physician Group (LPG) is the multispecialty physician and APP network practicing over Lee's 100+ locations

In response to the growing population and the need to provide quality, lifesaving healthcare, Lee Health Foundation was established in 1995. The foundation has worked together with the communities and healthcare team members to raise awareness and funds for exceptional, compassionate care closer to home.



From left: Lee Memorial Hospital, Gulf Coast Medical Center, Cape Coral Hospital, and HealthPark Medical Center with Golisano Children's Hospital

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission: To be a trusted partner, empowering healthier lives through care and compassion.

Vision: To inspire hope and be a national leader for the advancement of health and healing.

Values:

- **Respect**: We foster an environment of integrity and transparency. We show respect for you and your choices and one another as colleagues and people.
- **Excellence**: We strive for excellence in everything we do. We uphold the highest standards of safety, quality and deliver an exceptional experience.
- **Compassion**: We care for you and your loved ones like our own. We cultivate a safe, comforting and healing environment in every interaction.
- **Education**: We encourage individual and organizational learning as a means to promote healthier lifestyles and improve our delivery of care.

Key Statistics [1]

Total Operating Revenue: $4B
System Acute Beds: 1,799
System Skilled Nursing Beds: 205
Physicians and APPs: 1,441
Employees: Over 18,000
Practice Locations: 100+
Annual Patients: 433,000+
Medical Staff: 2,500

1. Source: Lee Health and Fast Facts

Awards and Recognition

Lee Health hospitals and providers are recipients of numerous quality awards and other types of recognition, including the illustrative designations below.



Fort Myers, Cape Coral and Southwest Florida


Downtown Fort Myers, FL

Strategically nestled along Southwest Florida's Gulf Coast is Fort Myers, one of America's most livable communities.

The region combines the amenities of a growing metropolitan area with the relaxed character and natural subtropical beauty for which Southwest Florida is known. Fort Myers and surrounding towns offer a range of neighborhoods and residential settings, with easy access to the beaches and communities of Cape Coral, Sanibel, Captiva, Bonita Springs, and Naples. Tampa, Sarasota, and Miami are well connected via I-75 and Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) forms a convenient gateway to national and international destinations.

Notably, Fort Myers boasts 271 sunny days per year. Annual temperatures remain between an average low and high of 65 and 84 degrees Fahrenheit respectively, with a breezy 75 degree midpoint. Residents benefit the region's warm climate which encourages an active, outdoor lifestyle throughout the year, with abundant opportunities for boating, fishing, golf and other recreational pursuits.

The brick-paved streets of downtown are a delight for history enthusiasts, while the broader Southwest Florida region offers an extensive array of dining, shopping, cultural and recreational options. The Edison and Ford Winter Estates contain a historical museum and 21 acre botanical garden on the adjacent sites of the winter homes of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford beside the Caloosahatchee River.

Combined with access to beaches, parks and recreation, the choice of educational options helps make Fort Myers a practical relocation consideration for executives moving with school-age children. The School District of Lee County operates an extensive network of elementary, middle and high schools, including schools in Fort Myers, Cape Coral, Estero, Bonita Springs and neighboring communities. Private education further expands the faith-based and independent options available to relocating families. There are 12 public universities and 28 state and community colleges alongside private higher education campuses across Florida.

Fort Myers serves as the hub of Lee County – the economic engine of a five-county region spanning industries from tourism and healthcare to advanced manufacturing and technology. The area's strong economic fundamentals are reflected in rising incomes and continued population and job growth. With a powerful combination of pro-business environment, shorter-than-average commute times, diverse neighborhoods, and a welcoming lifestyle, it's easy to imagine calling Fort Myers home sweet home.

Reporting Structure

This position reports to the enterprise EVP and COO of Acute Care & Nursing.

Jennifer Higgins, DNP, RN, NEA-BC

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Acute Care & Nursing

Jennifer Higgins is responsible for leading nursing strategies that support Lee Health's mission, vision, values and objectives. She works with other leaders within the health system to develop continuous improvement strategies for clinical quality, safety and patient experience programs in addition to creating strategies for the recruitment and retention of high-quality nursing staff. She is responsible for the Magnet Journey to Excellence process, which includes RN engagement, Patient Experience, Nursing quality indicators and strong collaboration with all areas across the system. She is responsible to lead key strategic service lines to include Oncology, Cardiovascular, and Orthopedics.

Jennifer began her career at Lee Health in 2000 when she joined the health system as an emergency room nurse. Throughout the years, she progressively advanced through a variety of key senior operational roles before being appointed chief nursing officer. Her most recent position was chief nurse executive at Gulf Coast Medical Center where she collaboratively developed a comprehensive transformation plan that included the successful opening of the first phases of the Gulf Coast Medical Center expansion project. As a part of the expansion, she also successfully moved the oncology and trauma program from Lee Memorial Hospital to Gulf Coast Medical Center and opened an 88 bed Emergency Department, and a new 52-bed ICU (intensive care unit) tower. Additionally, her leadership led to the early opening of 216 new acute care beds to help Lee Health manage the patient surge associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jennifer has achieved several advanced certifications, including Nurse Executive Advanced Certification, Certified Emergency Nurse and Advanced Trauma Nursing. She also participated in the Wharton Nurse Leaders Program, American Organization for Nurse Executives and is a past board member of the Southwest Florida Organization for Nurse Executives. She currently serves on the Greater Fort Myers Chamber and Lifelink of Florida Board of Directors.

She earned a Diploma in Nursing from St. Luke's School of Nursing, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of South Florida, a Master of Science in Nursing from Walden University and a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree at Walden University.

Position Summary

The Vice President of Care Transitions and Throughput provides executive leadership to improve patient throughput for all care coordination, discharge planning, and post–acute care transition functions across the health system.

This leader is responsible for managing the patient journey between care settings, from hospital to home, and all post acute settings as well as offerings both internally and externally to improve outcomes, reduce readmissions, and optimize efficiency.

This includes oversight of strategies that ensure seamless patient progression, reduce avoidable readmissions, improve operational efficiency, enhance patient and family experience, and reduce cost. Key responsibilities include overseeing the care management, post acute administration, home health, and the transfer center teams in collaboration with other care transitions resources both internally and through external contracts and relationships.

Supervisory Role

This leader oversees a team of four direct reports (system director of care management, system director of the home health program, senior administrator over skilled nursing and recovery, and system director of patient throughput and transfer).

The VP collaborates closely with the Chief Nursing and Operations Executives (CNOEs) over each entity in the system and will lead or serve on key enterprise committees including Length of Stay/Throughput and performance excellence teams.

Primary Duties and Responsibilities

- *Operational Efficiency*: Ensure consistency and accountability in throughput workflows, documentation, and discharge planning practices. Key performance indicators include improving length of stay, readmission rates, ED boarding and throughput metrics, post acute utilization and performance, transitions of care patient experience metrics, and total cost per case.
- *Clinical Integration*: Lead interdisciplinary teams (nursing, social work, care management, navigation) to coordinate care. Lead cross-functional forums, including throughput committees and transformation workstreams. Collaborate with utilization review, revenue cycle, and clinical teams to drive care transitions.

- *Post-Acute Strategy*: Develop relationships with internal and external post-acute providers to streamline transitions for patients, particularly the aging population and develop metrics and analysis to monitor effectiveness.
- *Transfer Center, System Analytics and Technology*: Oversee the transfer center that coordinates patient relocations, hospital-to-hospital transfers, and critical care transports across the Lee Health System, utilizing data for real-time decision making. Support the development and use of advanced tools for throughput improvement and post-acute planning.
- *Financial Impact*: Manage costs associated with care progression, manage prior authorization teams, and reduce denials. Monitor and evaluate transition metrics such as readmission rates, length of stay, throughput, and patient satisfaction scores. Drive the use of evidence-based practices and lead demonstrated financial results. Identify areas for efficiency and value capture.
- *Leadership and Culture*: Build and lead high performing multidisciplinary teams across the continuum. Foster collaboration among physicians, nursing, operations and community partners. Promote a culture of accountability, patient centeredness and innovation.

Candidate Qualifications

Education and Licensure

- Bachelor's degree required.
- Master's degree required. A master's degree in business, health administration, or Nursing is strongly preferred.

Experience, Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- 10 years of progressive leadership experience in care management environments.
- Proven success in a complex multi-site health system in driving care transitions and improved outcomes. Demonstrated success in LOS management, discharge planning, and utilization optimization across a multi-site health system.
- Understanding of payer partnerships and arrangements.
- Strong communication, project management, strategic planning, and analytical skills, especially in matrixed environments.
- Interpretation of clinical, operational, and financial data to support network strategies for capacity planning and patient retention.
- Ability to lead teams and drive initiatives independently with minimal oversight.
- Capability to engage cross-functional teams and foster interdepartmental collaboration.

Compensation

An attractive compensation, benefits, and relocation package will be offered commensurate with the candidate's experience.

Contact

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