



**Dimitri Cruz**

Dimitri Cruz is a Regional Vice President of Information Technology at RWJBH supporting five hospitals and the Mobile Health division. At RWJBH he has supported efforts to implement Epic; expand the Emergency Department and OR services into a new wing at Jersey City Medical Center; upgrade and replace cardiology, radiology and laboratory systems; and improve reporting. He brings over 25 years of IT experience having performed roles such as Chief Information Officer, Chief Information Security Officer, Managing Consultant and Executive Program Manager working for organizations like Northwell Health, Carepoint Health, Englewood Hospital and Medical Center, Cerecore, IBM and McKesson. He has had training in project management, continuous quality improvement, workflow and process engineering, IT Best Practices, and Security and Compliance. He has used this experience to align IT plans with Hospital operational strategies as well as improve departmental operations and enhance the customer IT experience.



**Shawn Ekwall, MBA, FACHE**  
Chief Operating Officer,  
IGEA Brain Spine & Orthopedics  
[www.IGEANeuro.com](http://www.IGEANeuro.com)

### **Bio**

Shawn is currently the Chief Operating Officer of IGEA Brain Spine & Orthopedics, a practice serving NYC and NJ specializing in neurosurgery, neurology, pain management, orthopedics, and neuropsychology. He teaches Health Systems and Health Leadership at Rutgers University's Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy on an adjunct basis. He is an owner/operator of a consulting firm for non-profit medical programs in New Jersey specializing in building and optimizing 340B drug pricing revenue cycles. Shawn was the 2021-2022 Autism Speaks Autism Ambassador for the State of New Jersey and volunteers with several other health-related groups, such as the Essex County Medical Reserve Corps (NJ DOH), the Maplewood Health Department, and ACHENJ, where he currently serves as Secretary.

### **Work History**

Shawn has worked in healthcare for 18 years, starting as a file clerk with the Roberto Clemente Center, NYC H+H where he developed an intense passion for helping disenfranchised persons and groups access care. After several promotions, he left RCC in 2016 as Assistant Program Director to join the North Jersey AIDS Alliance in Newark's Central ward as an Operations and Business Development Manager. At NJCRI, Shawn founded new healthcare programs focused on maternal, child & adolescent, LGBTQ+/Transitioning, Hepatitis-C, and adult medicine specialties. In addition, he created a 340B (STD) program that has cured over 300 individuals of Hepatitis C to date. Shawn Ekwall MBA LLC, a consulting firm, helps non-profits start and optimize 340B programs in New Jersey. Shawn's next stop was Holy Name Medical Center, via Healogics, in Teaneck NJ, where in 2018 he was the founding Program Director for a wound care center, and from pre-construction to licensure and post-go-live phases, led all operational and marketing performance to distinction. During this year, he began lecturing part time at Rutgers University and enjoys helping to develop future health leaders immensely. Shawn's next stop was RWJBarnabas Health's Medical Group (BHMGM). He served as a Regional Program Manager, overseeing between 10 and 20 physician practices in various hospital/ regional markets with many sub-specialties including Thoracic, Pulmonary/Critical Care, Trauma, Orthopedic, Urology, Cardiology and Primary Care. As the pandemic unfolded, Shawn was privileged to serve his program managers and staff in person. In late 2021 he accepted a position as COO of IGEA Brain Spine & Orthopedics and recently celebrated his first work anniversary.



**Michael Horton**

Michael Horton, FACHE serves as the Network Vice President for Radiology at Hackensack Meridian Health. In his role, Mike has direct oversight and leadership for strategic development, implementation of policy, establishment for clinical guidelines, ambulatory expansion and overall growth and excellence of network radiology operations.

With over two decades of radiological & hospital leadership experience, Mike incorporates business analytics, performance management and advanced clinical insight to drive and deliver exceptional patient outcomes.

Prior to his role as network vice president of radiology, Mike served as the Director of clinical operations at Hackensack University Medical Center, where he had direct oversight & responsibility for executive health, organ transplant, sleep medicine, and radiology.

In addition to developing numerous innovative and clinical procedural offerings within the state of New Jersey, Mike was a key developmental leader of Operation SMART. A unique partnership with the United States Army that trains military medical personnel. Under Mike's guidance, U.S. military men and women from across the nation have received advanced medical readiness training.

Mike received his bachelors of science degree in nuclear medicine with a concentration in healthcare administration from Manhattan College. Mike has a masters degree in health administration and is a fellow of the American College of healthcare executives.



**Lisa Knothe**

With over 25 years of human resources management experience, plus a passion for the nonprofit sector, Lisa Knothe was named vice president and chief human resources officer of [Children's Specialized Hospital](#), an [RWJBarnabas Health](#) facility.

In her new role, Knothe will oversee all human resources functions while cultivating an environment built on values and employee engagement, including attracting, retaining and promoting professional growth and inclusivity, for the New Brunswick-based hospital.

"I am confident that Ms. Knothe will guide CSH into a new era of workforce development, ensuring that employees are engaged and satisfied, and that diversity, inclusion and professional development opportunities are at the forefront of our work," Dr. Matthew McDonald III, CEO and president, Children's Specialized Hospital, said in a prepared statement. Since joining CSH in 2019, Knothe has held the positions of director of talent acquisition & employee experience and director of human resources. Over the past three years, she has played a pivotal part in improving recruitment, employee experience and the development of initiatives like the Employee Resource Groups. Prior to joining CSH, Knothe served as the human resources manager at RWJBarnabas Health Human Resources Service Center in Somerset.

A graduate of Stevens Institute for Technology with a master's degree in applied psychology and a concentration in human resources management, she started her career in HR working in retirement planning, health care and warehouse distribution before moving on to the Community FoodBank of New Jersey in Hillside, where she served as vice president of human resources and job training.

Knothe currently serves as a member of the Society for Human Resources Management and is certified from SHRM as a Senior Certified Professional, or SHRM-SCP, and holds a certification from the HR Certification Institute as a Senior Professional in Human Resources, or SPHR. She is also a member of RWJBH's Women's Leadership Alliance, a graduate of Rutgers University's Nonprofit Executive Leaders Program and is a fellow of Lead New Jersey, a group of leaders helping effect change throughout New Jersey.



**Stacie J. Newton**

Stacie J. Newton is Assistant Vice President of Marketing and Public Relations for RWJBarnabas Health, the largest integrated healthcare delivery system in New Jersey that provides treatment and services to more than 3 million patients annually. As Assistant Vice President, Newton oversees the public relations and communication strategies for Jersey City Medical Center, the leading provider of world-class healthcare in Hudson County. She is also responsible for leading marketing and communications for the health system's effort to end systemic racism, Ending Racism Together.

Before joining the RWJBarnabas team in 2017, Newton was Interim Executive Director of Public Affairs, Director of Marketing Communications and Special Assistant to the Board of Directors at University Hospital in Newark, where she was the liaison to the Board of Directors, and was directly responsible for overseeing all marketing activities, internal and external communications including media relations, social media and community outreach.

As an Adjunct Professor of English at Passaic County College, Newton has conducted in-class lectures for junior college students in Public Speaking, and as a consultant in public affairs, she has helped to establish strategic partnerships with community agencies to develop sustainable initiatives for addressing public policy issues within the greater Newark community.

A proud native of Newark, New Jersey, Newton earned a graduate degree in Public Administration, an undergraduate degree in Marketing from Kean University, and she has completed post-graduate in Brand Development and Strategic Marketing Communications from the Business School at Rutgers University. She has also earned certification in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace from the University of South Florida Muma College of Business.

Newton is affiliated with a variety of local and national organizations including Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, in which she served as the Presiding Officer for the Montclair, NJ Chapter, and where she also served as Vice President, Secretary and Chairman of the Fundraising Committee. She is a graduate of the prestigious Leadership Newark and Leadership New Jersey programs. Newton has served as Vice President of the Board of Directors of Programs for Parents, Inc. and she is an member of the Junior League of the Oranges-Short-Hills. Newton was the Vice President of Newark Preschool Council, Inc. New Jersey's largest Head Start Program from 2004 to 2011.



**Funso Olufade**

Head, US Commercial Finance  
Ascendis Pharma Inc.

Funso is a healthcare finance leader and pharmaceutical executive based in Princeton, NJ . He has held roles in various multi-national companies with the quest of improving global patient access to medicines. With biotech firms including Bayer, Sanofi, and Amicus Therapeutics, Funso also lived and worked in Europe for over four years and has travelled to over 30 countries. Funso holds a Ph.D. in Health Sciences from Seton Hall University, MBA Finance, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics from Rutgers University.

Funso Olufade is a guest professor at Rutgers University – Bloustein School of Public Policy and sits on the Executive Board of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHENJ). Funso also volunteers for a healthcare nonprofit - Devoted Skies delivering medical supplies to global underserved communities.



**Carol Vargas**

Carol Vargas has been a leader in the health care sector for over 20 years. As the Vice President of Integrated Care at Atlantic Health System, Carol is focused on transforming care delivery by connecting clinical, behavioral, and social care across the continuum, with the goal of producing great health outcomes and building healthier communities. Since joining AHS, Carol has developed strategies and programs in the areas of care coordination, community health, social determinants of health, mental and behavioral health, post-acute care, home care, and telemedicine. Together, these initiatives support the System's transition to value-based care and population health.

Carol attended the University of Rochester where she pursued her dual passions of health and business, earning a B.A. in Economics and a B.A. in Health, Behavior and Society. After years of corporate consulting, she moved to the not-for-profit sector to follow her passion of improving care and quality of life for older adults. Carol obtained her Master of Public Administration from New York University's Wagner School of Public Service, where she was the Leslie Jane Rosen Scholar recipient. Since then, Carol has been in healthcare administration in both the hospital and the corporate settings.