

## Hospital administrator Tim McManus knows what it's like to be a patient

BY TAMMIE SMITH Richmond Times-Dispatch | Posted: Sunday, May 25, 2014 10:00 pm

In a room filled with about 75 employees from HCA Virginia's Chippenham and Johnston-Willis hospitals, CEO Tim McManus removed his blazer, dress shirt and tie to reveal a hospital gown.

"This is a story of me. This is a story of all of us, told by me," McManus said to those gathered.

He was one of the speakers at the hospitals' TIM Talk event in February. The gathering was modeled after the TED Talk concept that brings together people to give short, powerful talks — 18 minutes or less — on issues, ideas and concepts. The original TED Talk topics were technology, entertainment and design-focused.

The letters for TIM, in this case, stood for "talent, imagination and music" — not the first name of the hospital CEO.

The idea came from Joyce Hall, a radiology diagnostic supervisor who went to a TEDx event and wanted to bring the concept to Chippenham and Johnston-Willis.

Gathered in Johnston-Willis' Stalker Auditorium, McManus and other HCA employees told stories of what inspired them in their work and personal lives.

Dr. David Randolph talked about woodworking. Dr. Thomas Eichler talked about his life in the theater. Jennifer Collins, the hospital's pastoral care director, talked about enjoying food without guilt.

When it was his turn, McManus foreshadowed what was to come: "We have all in some way experienced the human emotion of facing obstacles, obstacles that we never imagined," he said.

His obstacle — and inspiration — he revealed later was a diagnosis of cardiac and pulmonary sarcoidosis, a rare medical condition that causes inflammation. In his case, the inflammation is causing problems with his heart's electrical circuitry.

"I am every patient," said McManus as he stood and removed the outer layers of clothing to expose the type of vulnerability that he and other patients face when they put their trust in the doctors, nurses and other hospital workers.

"Because, at the end of the day, I'm not a suit anymore," McManus said.

"I am not somebody who is there to be looking at numbers. I am not somebody who needs to be thinking about all the things that make this hospital operate. I'm there just like you. I'm there to help our patients."

**Chippenham and Johnston-Willis** are two of HCA Virginia's six hospitals in the Richmond area.

HCA, a for-profit entity based in Nashville, Tenn., is one of the country's largest providers of health care,

with 165 hospitals and 115 freestanding surgery centers in 20 states and England.

Chippenham, located on Jahnke Road in Richmond, and Johnston-Willis, which is just off Midlothian Turnpike in Chesterfield County, have a total of 758 beds and more than 2,600 employees. In the fiscal year that ended December 2012, the hospitals had 33,000 patient admissions, according to information collected and reported by the nonprofit, state-supported Virginia Health Information.

McManus was tapped two years ago to lead the Richmond-area hospitals, promoted from previous positions of overseeing HCA Virginia's Northern Virginia market and serving as CEO of its 197-bed Reston Hospital Center.

On a typical morning, you will find him at either Chippenham or Johnston-Willis, doing rounds — going from floor to floor, talking to employees and dropping in on patients to ask how things are going.

“Tim’s leadership style is marked by collaboration and communication,” Rob Carrel, president of HCA’s Capital Division and senior executive of HCA Virginia, wrote in an email.

“He rounds daily on patients and staff, writes a weekly blog, holds employee town halls each quarter, and responds personally to feedback and questions he gets on our intranet. He’s a CEO who values input from his staff and uses their expertise and knowledge to make the most informed decisions possible.”

McManus makes certain patients know that they should speak up if they have an issue or compliment. During rounds one morning in March, he made sure the patients understood the information on a white board in each patient room. He asked them about pain control.

His blog, “Tim’s Take,” is a carryover from his days at Reston Hospital. He has used the blog to highlight employee achievements and to offer his take on current topics.

“It’s an easy opportunity to share with people what I see, what inspires me, what I am hearing from patients ... stories you wouldn’t hear about,” McManus said.

**Doctors don’t** know what causes sarcoidosis.

There are theories that something — possibly a virus, chemicals, bacteria — triggers an immune response that leads to the inflammation. Typically, the lungs or skin are affected. In rare cases, it affects the heart.

McManus was diagnosed with sarcoidosis five years ago.

He first noticed something was wrong when he began experiencing dizziness. First it was occasional. Then it was all day.

He would have to hold the handrails as he walked along the hospital hallways for support, he said. He’d awaken in the middle of the night with a rapid heartbeat. During one dinner with his wife, he passed out.

He underwent a series of tests — multiple tests, multiple times — before finally getting the diagnosis. The rapid heartbeat was what was causing the dizziness.

Like any patient getting a serious diagnosis, McManus had questions. He searched the Web.

“If you just Google any disease, it’s scary what comes up,” McManus said. “There are a lot of people who claim to be experts who aren’t, and there’s a lot of really dated materials.”

He turned to his doctors, with mixed results.

“I had a knowledgeable, well-trained younger doctor come in, and I remember asking the question: ‘How long will I live?’ That’s sort of the obvious question when you hear about any disease. He sort of callously said, ‘You have a 50 percent chance of making it two years.’ It was shocking,” McManus said.

“I have three young kids, at the time who were under (age) six. ... My regular doctor, who is more seasoned and more trained, came in. He said, ‘No, that’s dated studies and dated literature. That’s not at all what your prognosis is today.’ That’s the kind of thing I can envision any patient confused about,” McManus said.

There is no cure for the condition. Symptoms are managed with drugs and sometimes with medical devices (McManus had a defibrillator-pacemaker put in).

McManus said he thought long and hard about revealing something so personal to his co-workers. Margaret G. Lewis, his boss as president of HCA’s Capital Division before she retired last year, urged him to share.

“I didn’t want people to ever perceive it as looking for their sympathy,” he said. “I really wanted them to see it as understanding what they were doing in their roles as health care providers but equally important as what the role was with the patient.

“People see you sort of in a one dimensional. I know you as your job. The reality is there is much more to all of us. This was just a way of taking a step back and remembering that we are all people, and we all have passions.”

**Health care** is undergoing major change.

The Affordable Care Act and other initiatives are putting more emphasis on quality. Penalties are levied on hospitals that have too many patients readmitted within days of being discharged, suggesting they weren’t properly cared for initially.

Organizations are making hospital scores and rankings on infection rates, patient satisfaction and safety measures public.

“We’re all making changes,” McManus said.

“The type of leaders that we look for are probably different leaders than they were 10 years ago,” he said. “In the past, it was just promote the person who has been a good nurse or pharmacist or tech to become the leaders. Now there is more to that. When I think about employee engagement ... those drivers are what I want leaders to feel the charge around.”