Biography

Chris Van Gorder, FACHE
President & CEO, Scripps Health

As president and CEO of Scripps Health since 2000, Chris Van Gorder has been instrumental in positioning Scripps among the nation’s foremost health care institutions. Now he is leading the restructure of the $2.3 billion, integrated health system to best prepare for the changes of health care reform.

Board certified in health care management and an American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) Fellow, he also served as 2010 chairman of the association – an international professional society of more than 40,000 health care executives who lead hospitals, health care systems and other health care organizations. As chairman, he provided leadership for an established network of more than 80 ACHE chapters that provide local access to networking, education and career development. ACHE is also known for its prestigious FACHE credential, signifying board certification in health care management.

At Scripps Health, Van Gorder oversees all functions of the integrated health system, including its five acute-care hospital campuses, dozens of outpatient centers throughout San Diego County, and a regional home health service. More than 13,000 employees and 2,600 affiliated physicians provide care at Scripps, which has made the Fortune magazine “100 Best Hospitals to Work For” list for four consecutive years. Recently it was named by AARP as the No. 1 employer in the nation for workers 50 and older – the first California-based company to take top honors.

Named CEO shortly after arriving at Scripps in 1999, the organization was losing $15 million a year, and employee and physician confidence had hit bottom. He responded with a transparent, co-management style, configured an award-winning executive team, streamlined business operations and focused on internal efficiencies, physician relations and workplace culture – leading to a landmark turnaround.

Scripps now has its sights on regional growth and expansion, more than doubling its outpatient neighborhood locations, and expanding on nearly all its hospital campuses. The organization’s $2 billion growth and expansion plan for the San Diego region includes two new critical care centers, a landmark cardiovascular institute, and a new radiation therapy center. The Scripps Proton Therapy Center is scheduled to open in 2013 – one of a handful available in the United States.

Van Gorder’s rise to health care executive has been unconventional. His journey began as a hospital patient, when as a police officer he was critically injured during a family dispute call. After a lengthy recovery and starting a new career in hospital security, Van Gorder continued his education in health care management and rose to levels of increased responsibility. He continues to serve the public today as a reserve commander in the San Diego County Sheriff’s Department Search & Rescue Unit, as a licensed emergency medical technician (EMT) and as an instructor for the American Red Cross.

In 2006, Van Gorder’s volunteer work was honored with the Maltese Cross Award by the San Diego County Fire Chiefs, and again in 2007 with the MedAssets Outstanding Humanitarian
Award. In 2007, he also received USC’s prestigious Guardian Award for his significant achievements in health care and commitment to the community. In 2009, he received the distinguished B’nai B’rith National Healthcare Leader award. And this year, Van Gorder was recognized by the American College of Healthcare Executives with the ACHE Exemplary Service Award.

Van Gorder received his master’s degree in public administration/health services administration at the University of Southern California, completed the Wharton CEO Program at the University of Pennsylvania and earned his bachelor’s degree from California State University, Los Angeles.

In March 2006, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed Van Gorder to the California Commission on Emergency Medical Services and, in 2010 Van Gorder was reappointed. In January 2007, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reappointed Van Gorder to the U.S. Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). He is a clinical professor in health administration at the University of Southern California, where he also serves on the Board of Councilors of the university’s school of policy, planning and development. In addition, Van Gorder is a member of the editorial boards of HealthLeaders and the Governance Institute.

In 2008, Van Gorder and his executive team were named the Top Leadership Team in Health Care for large health systems by HealthLeaders magazine. Since 2007, Van Gorder has been included on the “100 Most Powerful in Health Care” list, compiled by Modern Healthcare magazine. In 2011, he was listed as No. 18.

Van Gorder was part of medical history following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona, M.D., asked a Scripps medical unit to staff a temporary clinic for hurricane survivors in the Houston Convention Center. The request for Scripps’ assistance marked the first time the federal government asked a private health care organization for long-term support for a nationally organized disaster relief plan. The Scripps Medical Response Team later provided community medical support following the 2007 San Diego County wildfires, and again in January 2010, when Van Gorder and the Scripps Medical Response Team traveled to Port au Prince, Haiti to aid victims of the devastating earthquake.

In October 2010, Van Gorder announced a new direction for Scripps Health. In anticipation of dramatic change in health care, he “turned the organization on its side,” creating a horizontally matrixed management structure to identify and significantly reduce unnecessary variation in patient care and health care operations. The new “One Scripps” approach led to more than $70 million in performance improvements in the first year.