

MODERN HEALTHCARE'S 2010 UP & COMERS



Jim Kendrick, 39, CEO, Longview (Texas) Regional Medical Center

Since the ninth grade, just about every step Jim Kendrick has taken led him on the path to being a hospital executive, with one exception: working as a jump master at a bungee-jumping tower.

“That was great, always convincing people to do things they were scared to death to do,” says Kendrick, CEO of Longview (Texas) Regional Medical Center.

Kendrick, 39, says he hasn’t drawn any lessons for healthcare management from the experience, but maybe he learned some of the negotiating skills that Don Lorack saw in Kendrick when they worked together at Hillcrest Health System in Tulsa, Okla.

Lorack, who was CEO of Hillcrest until it was sold in 2004 to Ardent Health Services, Nashville, says Kendrick was instrumental in several deals that built Hillcrest into an integrated delivery system. “Jim literally could do it all,” says Lorack, who became CEO of Anaheim (Calif.) Regional Medical Center in July. “He didn’t need a lot of hands-on support. He just needed a little direction. You passed the ball to Jim, and he just ran with it.”

Kendrick’s parents both worked in healthcare – his mother as a nurse, his father as an administrator and then as an entrepreneur who founded several companies. “I saw the dynamics of what it meant to run a hospital and got to see all of the exciting things that made that role work,” he says.

For most of the first decade of his career, Kendrick made that role work for Hillcrest, including as chief operating officer of Tulsa Regional Medical Center from January 1999 until the sale to Ardent in August 2004. In the transition from tax-exempt to investor-owned, Kendrick says he saw the discipline that Ardent was bringing to the organization and how helpful it could be for the system. His next move was into an investor-owned company, Triad Hospitals, working again as a COO at its Wesley Medical Center in Hattiesburg, Miss., for a little over a year before landing his first CEO job at Longview Regional in December 2005. In July 2007, Community Health Systems, Franklin, Tenn., acquired Triad Hospitals.

Michael Portacci, a division president for Community whose portfolio includes Longview Regional, says Kendrick focused on the basics of service, quality and relationships – with employees, the medical staff and the board – to boost admissions by 17% and double operating earnings in his first four years on the job.

Kendrick persuaded the company to invest \$1 million over and above the hospital's capital plan to buy a daVinci surgical robot, because he had built a relationship with an experienced robotic surgeon who wanted to come to Longview, Portacci says. Kendrick says that adding robotic surgery was necessary to refocus the hospital's competitive sights beyond Longview to competitors in nearby Tyler, Texas.