

Credentialing Resource Center Journal

Profile: The 2018 CRC Medical Staff Leader of the Year

Leading with kindness and dedication

John McDonald, MD, MSHM, CMQ
Medical City North Hills in North Richland Hills, Texas

*Editor's note: This profile is part of the special 2018 CRC contest coverage, a collaboration between **Credentialing Resource Center Journal**, **Medical Staff Briefing**, and **Credentialing Resource Center Daily**. Check back in throughout [Winners' Week](#) to learn more about this year's CRC Achievement Awards and CRC Symposium Case Study Competition winners.*

MSL of the Year_John McDonald-carousel.jpg



"I did not know that I'd been nominated," confesses **John McDonald, MD, MSHM, CMQ**, referring to his win as the 2018 Credentialing Resource Center Medical Staff Leader of the Year. "The first I knew about it was when the award was announced at MEC. There was an agenda item listed as 'Recognition' with nothing else written. I had no idea what that was about." McDonald, a chief medical officer (CMO) and board-certified pathologist at Medical City North Hills (MCNH) hospital in North Richland Hills, Texas, has also been medical director of the MCNH laboratory since 1991. But his impressive résumé does not stop there. McDonald has been involved with the organized medical staff for more than 26 years. He's served on numerous committees and enjoyed a tenure as chair of the board of trustees. With a look at his repertoire, it's obvious how much time and commitment he's devoted to his patients and colleagues.

According to **Bonnie Conley, CPCS**, director of medical staff services at MCNH, McDonald has only recently been compensated for all his personal and professional sacrifices when he was awarded the CMO position. This role was in addition to his job of running the pathology department and overseeing the lab. Conley says that she has "seen him here [the lab] many a late night working to assure that everything is complete. This commitment of time over the years shows the true heart of Dr. McDonald and his passion for the hospital and the patients we care for. He wants to make the hospital the best it can be." Despite his long hours, Conley maintains that McDonald's work is never compromised, and he continues to receive top marks on both patient and physician surveys.

About the nomination

McDonald accepted his Medical Staff Leader of the Year award during February's 2018 CRC Symposium in Las Vegas. The CRC Achievement Awards were designed to commend MSPs and medical staff leaders who have distinguished themselves in the exceptional impact they've made on their broader professional communities. McDonald, along with the other winners, was chosen by a panel of accomplished industry experts with very high expectations. Needless to say, he did not disappoint. Panel member **Carol Cairns, CPMSM, CPCS**, who is also an advisory consultant with The Greeley Company, said this of McDonald and his medical staff leader position: "It is

often a thankless role and sometimes very politically charged. Dr. McDonald's contributions over 26 years speak volumes about how successful he was in his efforts. His continuous involvement in the medical affairs of the organization reflects a long-time calling and commitment to improving patient care."

The panel cited McDonald's deft ability to balance leadership and clinical responsibilities while upholding practitioner vetting and governance as the cornerstones of the high-quality, patient-centered healthcare that MCNH provides. Panel members also noted his "ability to energize, empower, and support his colleagues from an array of collaborating disciplines and his channeled penchant for governing and commitment to ongoing professional development."

"For years the credentials committee has relied on his expert review of initial applications at each meeting," attests Conley. "You can count on him to provide information that is thorough. He truly understands the importance of a sound, consistent, and reliable credentialing process as the gatekeeper to providing excellent care to our patients. He is an expert in the interpretation and implementation of the medical staff bylaws."

The winner's core duties and challenges

McDonald is certified in medical staff leadership (CMSL) through HCPro and The Greeley Company, obtaining the qualifications for the CMSL designation on his own time. He describes his medical staff responsibilities earnestly. "My main duty is to help set the tone so that our patients get taken care of efficiently and with excellent quality. [That] begins with credentialing and extends through all-encompassing, open, as well as fair and efficient medical staff leadership. My main goal is to be available and approachable so that I can intercede when necessary to help patient care proceed as optimally as possible."

But proactive communication has its limits, and McDonald admits that time is an almost constant challenge when juggling so many important tasks. "The biggest challenges going forward are keeping up with all the reportable metrics and finding ways to engage the medical and hospital staff in the common goal of providing high-quality, efficient care for our patients."

His relationship with staff

One of McDonald's most distinguishing features is his unique connection with the staff. "He is truly 'the voice of reason' in every medical staff committee meeting," Conley mentions. "He remains quiet until everyone has voiced their opinion; he then processes the discussion and formulates a resolution that exhibits his many years of experience in medical staff affairs. His resolution is one of wisdom that makes everyone sit up and have an 'aha' moment. ... He does not take his responsibilities lightly and always amazes the committee with his thoroughness."

McDonald sees his working relationship with the staff as a particular source of pride. "It is always a compliment when members of the medical or hospital staff feel comfortable enough to approach me with issues that I can help work through. Most of the time that involves helping to engage various parties so that they team up and communicate better for the patient's benefit." In fact, McDonald makes it a point to include the staff in as many of his extracurriculars as he can. This multitasking physician dances, sings, and plays the trumpet and is a dedicated member of a barbershop quartet known as "The Mac Harmonies."

Every Valentine's Day, in appreciation of all their hard work, The Mac Harmonies deliver a singing telegram to MCNH's medical staff along with a rose and a card. The quartet also makes an appearance on National Prayer Day, where Dr. McDonald plays his trumpet during the hospital's prayer ceremony. An avid supporter of his alma mater, Texas Christian University (TCU), McDonald regularly volunteers his time and financial support. He also regularly gives out tickets to staff members interested in attending any of TCU's games.

"All [these] activities are fun to do and provide some time to smile and think about things other than work," he says. "It's always interesting to know something about the lives and talents of colleagues that are not necessarily work-related. If I show some of my talents or interests, I will usually learn something about the talents or interests of others."

His proudest accomplishments

McDonald looks back on his long career with a great deal of fondness. A particular source of pride for him is the length of time he's been involved with medical staff leadership while still enjoying the support of his colleagues and hospital administration. "My first involvements in medical staff affairs were on the credentials committee and bylaws," he notes. "Those are obviously two of the most important committees in setting the collegial tone that makes a well-functioning medical staff. Being involved in those committees stimulated my interest in being involved in medical staff leadership." This is reflected in McDonald's own administration, which has been very hands-on with the educational opportunities available to medical staff leaders.

But of all the choices in his life, McDonald still cites his role as a pathologist as being the most impactful. "Pathologists interact with almost every different specialty in the hospital at one time or another. That broad interaction played a role in me being supported by my medical staff colleagues to be involved in medical staff leadership."

Final thoughts

McDonald's parting advice to his colleagues? Never hesitate to get involved. Participation provides an amazing opportunity to learn and engage in the health of your patients. "There is always something new to learn. Just when you think you've got it pretty well wired, something new pops up. It's these new things that keep medical staff leadership interesting!"

Photos from MCNH's celebration:

[IMG_0467.jpg](#)



McDonald with MCNH CEO Xavier Villarreal

[JPEG image 0444.jpg](#)



McDonald with Conley and medical staff services coordinator Beverly Napper

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