Mark Taubman Becomes Dean

The former chair of the Department of Medicine who served as acting CEO of the Medical Center for nine months is the new dean of the School of Medicine and Dentistry.

Mark Taubman, who came to the Medical Center as chief of the cardiology unit in 2003, is the school's 10th dean. Effective March 1, the appointment follows this winter's announcement that Bradford Berk '81M (MD/PhD) is returning as CEO of the Medical Center after suffering a serious spinal cord injury last spring.

"Mark is the best possible choice for dean," Berk said of Taubman's appointment. "He is a physician-scientist who is active in the laboratory yet possesses a broad institutional view. As an active cardiologist, he also understands the challenges of practicing medicine."

As chief of cardiology, Taubman was the guiding force behind the expansion of cardiac patient care services, faculty recruitment, strengthening treatments for those with heart arrhythmias and heart failure, adding new preventive cardiology programs, such as the women's heart program, and forging strong regional services. Taubman

interaction, that communication, really makes job satisfaction much better for the caregiver. We need to change our dynamic and make sure that there is time for the interaction to occur. I hope we can find ways to legitimize this as part of the way we operate."

When he returned to Rochester from New Jersey in September, Berk began working on Medical Center projects but devoted his afternoons to rehabilitation therapy.

While he continues to use a motorized wheelchair, Berk has made remarkable progress. He can stand, do squats, and walk with assistance. He can feed himself. He can brush his teeth. His left arm has recovered more strength and flexibility than the right. As of this winter, he couldn't transfer from his chair to a bed, but he expected to be able to do that when he builds up strength in both arms.

Only minimal sensation has returned. His right side has much more sensation than his left, but he describes the sensation as “patchy and not normal.” By touch alone, he can't tell the difference between fabrics—between a terrycloth towel and smooth cotton pants. His stamina has returned, and he keeps a very busy schedule.

“There's a lot of progress, but it's always too slow,” Berk says. “As long you continue to progress, you have to keep pushing ahead. I am counting on continuing to progress.”

Berk wants to apply his personal experiences as a patient to improve clinical care at the Medical Center through “quality, safety, care, and courage.”

“It is a great opportunity to make this an even better place for patients and providers,” Berk says. “That's a key message: I'm not just doing this for patients but also for providers—not just for those who have direct contact with patients but for everyone who works here. Everyone who works here is part of a health care organization and they are here in part because they want to do good for people. So we should be able to improve job satisfaction across the whole institution. That's the caring part. It's as much about caring for each other as it is about caring for our patients.”

Michael Wentzel is the editor of Rochester Medicine.