



136 of 143 DOCUMENTS

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HEADLINE: Hopkins names 1st medical czar; Popular acting dean keeps hospital duties

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BODY:

The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions moved yesterday to settle years of internal conflict and confront the painful new financial realities of health care, naming acting medical school dean Dr. Edward D. Miller to be the first medical czar over the East Baltimore complex.

With the appointment, trustees have elevated a popular physician and administrator to oversee both the Hopkins medical school, which is part of the university, and Johns Hopkins Hospital. The university and hospital were incorporated separately in 1867 under dual bequests by Baltimore merchant and banker Johns Hopkins.

Miller, chairman of Hopkins' anesthesiology department, became acting medical school dean in March after the resignation of Michael M. E. Johns. Miller indicated yesterday that he intended to retain the authority and duties of the dean in his new job, which he assumes immediately.

Colleagues yesterday said Miller's service during the past year proved his personality and experience were well-suited to address the financial stresses buffeting the world of academic medicine.

"This is a historic occasion," said Dr. William R. Brody, president of the university. "I don't think that [benefactor Hopkins] could have envisioned the kind of challenges that the delivery of health care could present.

"We are faced at the turn of the century with a dramatic constellation of changes, brought about by an effort to contain cost," Brody said.

Miller's new position, officially chief executive officer and dean of medicine, will allow him to lead one of the nation's premier academic medical centers. The president of the hospital will report to Miller, who in turn will report only to Brody and the trustees.

The arrangement can be found at a number of U.S. academic medical centers, including Penn State and Duke universities and Emory University in Atlanta, where Johns holds a similar post.

Hopkins names 1st medical czar; Popular acting dean keeps hospital duties The Baltimore Sun January 15, 1997, Wednesday,

Yesterday, Miller said he would try to defend the quality of the work and instruction at Hopkins as the hospital becomes more efficient at offering care to patients. Equally important, he said, would be his role in articulating the medical center's priorities.

"Part of my job is to make sure that I'm the spokesman, so people know where Hopkins is going," the gregarious Miller said at a news conference yesterday afternoon. "There's so many different parts of Hopkins."

Miller, 53, was a physician at the University of Virginia and chairman of anesthesiology at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons before arriving in Baltimore in 1994.

Hopkins trustees initially had hoped to appoint someone from outside to the position, but kept looking with admiration at the job Miller was doing as acting dean.

"We wanted a person who could deal with the great changes that are affecting health care in our country," said Hopkins trustee Edward K. Dunn Jr., who led the search for the new medical chancellor. Details of Miller's contract were not released.

Miller's appointment means that the three most powerful positions at Hopkins have changed hands in little over a year.

Brody arrived in August from the University of Minnesota. And Ronald R. Peterson, a widely acclaimed Hopkins veteran of 23 years, was promoted in December to replace hospital President James A. Block. Block resigned in September, saying that reporting to a medical czar would have diminished his stature.

Several administrators and doctors said the united front presented by the new team -- and the decision to give one person ultimate authority for medical matters -- would allow Hopkins to make decisions more quickly.

George L. Bunting Jr., chairman of the hospital board of trustees and the university trustees' point man on medicine, underscored the point at the afternoon news conference.

"We'll be speaking with one voice with Dr. Miller," Bunting said. "Before, we had two separate lines of authority and really, there was no one place for someone to articulate the vision."

Trustees also said the personal chemistry of Miller, Brody and Peterson made the choice a natural one.

"I'm personally looking forward to this. With both Ron Peterson as president of the hospital, and Edward Miller, I can't think of a better duo to lead us into the 21st century," said Dr. Neil Miller, a professor of neuro-ophthalmology at Hopkins.

"I don't think it's so important what you call somebody -- it's having people who care about the institution, who communicate with each other and share the same goals," said the professor, who is not related to the medical czar.

While Edward Miller is not considered a "Hopkins man" -- he came to Baltimore less than three years ago -- he is a well-regarded academic. And that will serve him well as he looks to change the way business is done at Hopkins, physicians there said.

Block and Johns had clashed in substance and style over how best the medical research and clinical giant should confront the new realities of managed care. Insurers and health maintenance organizations are limiting what they will pay for medical care, while federal programs paying for health care and research are also likely to be reduced or restrained.

As neither man was paramount over medical affairs, that led to mixed signals. And many senior physicians were apprehensive that the rush into the world of managed care might damage the quality of the teaching, care and research

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that made Hopkins' reputation. But several medical faculty members said the creation of a chief executive and the decision to name Miller to the position allayed those concerns.

"I think the way it's structured is terribly important," said Dr. Solomon H. Snyder, a senior Hopkins professor of neuroscience and noted researcher who hailed the selection of Miller.

"The biggest worry facing academic medical centers is the intrusion of the business world into academic affairs. Trustees of universities are frequently saying, 'You ivory tower guys, we cannot afford to have you intellectuals running medical centers.' "

Hopkins' medical institutions "have gone through a number of years during which the faculty of the medical school felt that they were getting conflicting guidance and advice," said Dr. Alfred Sommer, dean of the Hopkins School of Public Health. "There's now a sense that a team is in place with a single vision and direction."

The tasks facing the new medical leadership -- Brody, Miller and Peterson -- will not be easy. Peterson predicts that a decrease in the hospital's revenue for the next few years probably will lead to a reduction in jobs at the hospital -- regularly rated as one of the nation's best -- which has 1,036 licensed beds, 6,000 employees, a medical staff of 1,700 physicians and 900 residents, and an annual operating budget of \$ 600 million.

Placement of the hospital beneath the university president (in this case, beneath a medical czar as well) is not without precedent at Hopkins. From 1972 to 1982, Steven Muller, a political scientist who also was the university president, led the hospital as well. He relinquished the hospital post to concentrate on the university campus. Hopkins university's first president also briefly supervised the hospital.

The decision to create a medical czar, announced nearly a year ago, draws upon the intentions of the institutions' founder. Philanthropist Hopkins, whose dual bequests created the hospital and university that bear his name, recommended the two be combined someday.

"In all your arrangements in relation to this hospital, you will bear constantly in mind that it is my wish and purpose that the institution should ultimately form a part of the medical school of that university for which I have made ample provision in my will," Hopkins wrote in a letter dated March 10, 1873, to the first trustees of the hospital. With the appointment of the first Hopkins medical czar yesterday, the hospital's trustees have fulfilled their charge.

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GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO, JOHN MAKELY: SUN STAFF, Appointed: Dr. Edward D. Miller, the Johns Hopkins Medical Institution's new medical czar, answers questions during a news conference yesterday afternoon.

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