

Health information is everywhere. It's confusing. We're sitting down with doctors to help make sense of it.

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Take me to Crouse. Take me to Crouse. Take me to Crouse. They saved my life. Welcome to the studio

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for the brand new podcast at Crouse Hospital. I'm Carrie Lazarus and I'm very excited to be

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the host. My guests will be doctors and other health care professionals who actually provide

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care in our community. And joining us now is our very first guest, the doctor in charge,

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Dr. Seth Kronenberg. Welcome to the podcast. Thank you. Very exciting it is. And we are here just

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after you celebrated your third year as CEO of the hospital. It's also employee recognition week here

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at Crouse. Congratulations on your tenure which actually started on the day you were born because

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you've really spent your whole life in this place. That is true. I happen to be born at Crouse. My first job was in the pharmacy at Crouse as a pharmacy tech over the summer. Four daughters were

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born at Crouse. Was on the medical staff for 20 years as an internist. So very exciting to be able

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to lead the organization and our employees is what makes us special. And the way I describe Crouse,

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service delivery of a regional medical center with a family community hospital culture and that is unique and that's our Crouse family. So we love our Crouse family and employee recognition week

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is a time to celebrate our family. We always say it's a real family. So that doesn't mean everybody

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always agrees on everything. But we like to enjoy each other's company, laugh together, have fun together, and employee recognition week is a time to be able to do that. Well,

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speaking of laughing together, I you know, I've I've spent quite a bit of time here in the last few weeks as we've gotten ready for the Take Me to Crouse podcast. And, you know,

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you can't help but look around and see that people here are happy all the way from the,

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you know, the doctors all the way along the road of, you know, the the people who clean the rooms,

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the people who check your security badges, the people who take your money at the garage.

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What is it? What's going on here? It's a hospital. Why is everybody so happy? It's our culture is is special and it really is that family. And we have people come in and people say to me, "Oh,

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did you tell people I was coming because everybody was so friendly?" And no, that's that's just the Crouse culture. And at Crouse, we say every moment matters. And we spend a lot of work with valet and

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environmental services and nutritional services to tell them that their impact on the patient experience is equal to the doctors and nurses and everybody else. So every encounter with every

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patient is as critical as every other encounter. And our family lives that. And really to have walk

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down the halls and have people smiling and really enjoy being here in a very stressful environment. I mean, we're not sugar coating how stressful healthcare is, but to be able to enjoy

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each other's company and be happy at work and have fun at work is something we're very proud of. Now, this being employee recognition week, one of the things that you're doing is honoring employees

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um for their service. you know, starting at five years and going up to like 45 50 years. I mean,

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I hear you have a number a good number of people who've been here for 45 years. Yeah. It's that continuity that really allows us to to build on the Crouse culture. And actually, last year,

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I honored somebody who had been here longer than I had been alive. They were had been here 55 years.

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And really unbelievable longevity. And you don't stay at a place that long unless you really enjoy

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being there. So to be able to have our employees who have been here for a long period of time pass that on to the newer generations is something that's really rewarding. One of the things

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that you are very passionate about is uh getting and keeping good people. That's a challenge in

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all fields today in business, healthcare, all the rest. You have a program that's pretty unique. Can

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you talk about workforce development? Yeah, we're in the greatest workforce shortage in the history of healthcare and that's not an exaggeration. So when we find people who can work at Crouse

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and really fit into that culture and be able to provide the highest level of patient care but do it with a community hospital family culture. We want to keep those employees for their entire

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careers. So we have our workforce development grow with us, grow with Crouse and we want people

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to come here and build their careers here. So if you come and we have lots of people who for 30,

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40, 50 years, stay at the same exact job that they started, beautiful career. But if you come in and

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you want to be someone in nutritional services and work your way up to being an RN in the ICU,

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we have a great story uh for someone who just did that. We want to hardwire those pathways. There's

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funds through the union training fund. We have a great partnership with SEIU 1199 and opportunity

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to hardwire pathways. So whether you're someone in nutritional services who wants to become a doctor,

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a doctor who wants to get an MBA, everything in between, we have opportunities at Crouse.

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And in addition to being a hospital, we're a big business. So we have 4,000 employees and we're

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have opportunities in business, in IT, and really reinforcing the incredible careers you can have at

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Crouse. Talk about how it works. You just said, you know, an example would be you can start

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in nutritional services and and go through and actually become a doctor. How do you do that while

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still working here? That's the beauty of coming to work for a place that invests in workforce because

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you can come in, work full-time, and have training fund dollars to pay for your education. And we

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have people who were PAs and became docs and and and great stories like that. And over the years

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we had some unbelievable one-off stories where people became nurses starting in environmental

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services but sort of navigated that on their own. And what we've tried to do over the last few years is hardwire some pathways so people can see when they take the job. Here is the path forward.

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here how is how my education could be funded while I'm working full-time and here's the

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career I can end up with community hospital you have used that phrase so many times this is the

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community hospital what does that mean so I say we're the community's hospital so we're the only

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locally governed independent community hospital in the region and that local governance makes a difference so when you look at our board of directors it's people who live in our community

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who receive healthcare in our community invested in what happens in our community. And that really

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leads our vision of providing the best in patient care and promoting community health by people who live in the community. And that's reinforced with what we're trying to do with these podcasts

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is medical education, medical uh uh information from doctors who are invested in the community,

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who live in the community, who know what's going around in our community is so impactful. So the fact that we're able to be the community's resource both inpatient, outpatient, and through

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educational services like this is something we're very proud of and that differentiates us from others in the region. Well, I'm so glad you mentioned the podcast because I think this

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is such an important opportunity to do something local because obviously the health space there are

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so many doctors and other health professionals personalities who are talking about health but

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it's you know people here will never be able to get an appointment with any of those people.

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They'll never be able to touch them in any way. But here, you know, we're going to be having local

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doctors and health providers who can say, "This is what I'm doing. This is a new procedure. You

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can actually get it here." Um, I think I that's what I am excited about as we as we start this

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very impactful and it's a couple things. One is patients can use AI and Google their symptoms and

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and procedures and there's benefit to that. But to have local people, local physicians who are

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performing procedures and doing treatment here at Crouse explain to patients, that's much more

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meaningful than being able to do something on the internet. And then certainly you can go nationally

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and see people on national news talking about procedures, but if they're not appropriate or

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they're not done in this region, that's not helpful. So really to get I mean you built your whole career on local care and hearing from local expertise and that's something that's very

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meaningful to patients. We don't just it's not just meaningful to us. It's meaningful to patients to be able to hear that local expertise and say I have that condition or that's a procedure that

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I'm interested in. And then connecting them with those local experts. Well, when we first talked

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about doing this um and you were saying we have so many great stories that are happening inside this

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building um but we're busy taking care of patients and we really that's not what we do. And so here

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I am to do that. And so far uh you know and and the audience will be seeing and you'll be able

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to watch these and listen to them so many local doctors who have come back from their medical

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training and just wanted to be here at Crouse. I mean it's kind of a remarkable number isn't it?

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And national expertise I mean these are people who could work anywhere right and choose to to practice at Crouse and bring their talents. And the challenge for us in administration is to arm

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our extremely talented physicians with the latest and greatest technology. One of the things that I enjoy doing is reminding both our own employees and our Crouse family and then the community the

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amazing things that we do here because you get stuck in the day-to-day and and take things for granted, but really world-class care is provided here in a community hospital setting, right? I

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mean so many things and you know starting with the tiniest patients in the neonatal intensive

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care unit. It's it is remarkable that babies born at 23 weeks gestation one pound and they're saving

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these babies from Canada to Pennsylvania between Albany and Rochester that that massive territory

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and high-risk OB and NICU. We started as a women's and infants hospital 150 years ago. one of our

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core services and we're very proud of the care we provide here. Put it we would put it up with anywhere nationally and to be able to receive that level of care in your local community is something

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that's really amazing. And when you walk through the NICU and you see these little tiny babies,

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uh, yeah. And then you go to our NICU reunion that we have at the zoo every year and you see

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18 year olds and 22 year olds and 15 year olds that look like everybody else. And the

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relationship that the parents have with the physicians who took care of those kids really

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uh is inspiring. Couple of years ago, I went down to Cornell University and interviewed a former

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NICU patient and he was about to run a race with a doctor from the NICU who took care of him. I mean,

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you think about these babies who have so many issues with breathing and the fact that he I mean,

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this kid's a long he's not a kid anymore. I mean, he's a young man, but he's he's a long-distance runner. It was just it was remarkable. And the connection that you felt between the two of them,

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it was really Well, when our NICU doctors go to the reunion, they're treated like rock stars. I

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mean, they're really truly life-saving care and uh it's just very inspiring to see. Another thing,

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you know, you people see it all over is uh you know, the shortest weight times in the emergency

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room. And doesn't everybody love the word short when it comes to weight times in the ER? How do

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you do it? So, it's access and qualities because you don't want to receive quick care that's not

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high quality care. And really, we've been blessed with really amazingly talented physicians,

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an incredible nursing team, and then the entire institution just committed to having patients

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move throughout the system so that we avoid the backlogs. But it's been a big emphasis of ours

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to be there for the community. During COVID, we added beds when others uh did not. Access

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is really one of our fundamental pillars. So to provide access through our emergency department, which is our front door, in a quick manner, but to deliver high quality care is something we're

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very proud of. And it's a lot of hard work by a lot of team members and it that's everybody. is

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environmental services turning over the beds. But uh something we're very proud to serve the community because you hear all the horror stories at different places throughout the country and

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to be able to have quick, efficient, high quality emergency room care is something that's a resource

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to the community. When you go to the JMA Dome, you see the signs everywhere. Crouse is the official

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health care partner of Syracuse University athletics. I mean, that's a lot of care,

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not just the orthopedic surgeon running onto the field to make sure that a football player

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is okay. You really provide the full range of health care for SU athletes. Yeah. And we have a great partnership with Syracuse University. We're neighbors up here. We're the official healthcare

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provider for Syracuse athletics, but we have tremendous touch points with Syracuse University. the chancellor and the chancellor elect are on our board of directors. Great partnerships in

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education and then providing care for the student athletes whether it's cardiac care or imaging or

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orthopedic care is something that uh it's been a great partnership for us. One thing that everybody

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knows from the commercials and we just uh had Todd Hobin uh saying this on our little open for the

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podcast is you know take me to Crouse they saved my life. The stroke care and the cardiac care

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um are so high level and I think that people now really associate with probably your the greatest

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outline in the history of health care. Take me to Crouse. Well, we're very proud of our expertise in cardiac and in stroke because as a patient, you don't necessarily know what you

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whether you're having a heart attack or a stroke. The symptoms really can uh can be similar. So,

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to be able to provide expertise in both and really world class door to intervention times in both

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service lines is something that is a tremendous service to the community. From the stroke side,

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we're a comprehensive stroke certified program. We're the only community hospital that has a

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comprehensive stroke program in the state of New York and very proud to be able to provide three

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endovascular neurosurgeons in two of the latest and greatest hybrid labs providing the best door

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to intervention times. And some of those stories are unbelievable. We have a gentleman who came in,

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had a stroke, was unable to talk or walk, had an intervention done, and was at the New York State

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Fair the next day. And people come in with with really close to miraculous outcomes. Unbelievable.

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Well, you um practiced medicine for 20 years before you came to work at the hospital on

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the administrative side. Um, your father led this hospital as well, Dr. Paul Kronenberg.
Everybody,

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you know, knows that and his legacy. How has that informed you stepping into the same shoes a few

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years later informed your approach to running Crouse? Well, it's funny because neither one

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of us had any intention of of taking this job, but one of the things he taught me early on was

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do the best for the patient and everything else will follow. And that's something that guides every decision we make. What's best for the patient. We're not looking at what's best for

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the business. We're not looking at what's best for the institution, but what's best for the patient and build everything around that and everything will fall into place. Do you miss taking care

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of patients day to day? I mean, you did it for I I loved it. As I said, I didn't intend to go into administration. It was something that just happened. But I love taking care of patients.

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I do miss it, but I also love the challenge of being able to provide for our community improving

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the health of our entire community in this role, but you do miss the individual interactions with

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patients and uh that relationship. Yeah. How is your relationship with the staff coming to it as a

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medical doctor? I mean, there have been other CEOs at other hospitals who are really business people,

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right? And you know, obviously we're biased here, but having physicians lead institutions that

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provide health care really is uh advantageous. And I think for someone like myself who practiced here

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to have that sort of street credit with with staff and other physicians, I I say you being a good

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physician doesn't make you a good administrator because those are two separate skill sets, but you better have been a good physician if you're going to be a good administrator. So,

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lots of relationships over years with physicians and staff. I was able to bring that uh to to this

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role. And I think when people know that you have the best interest of the patient and the best interest of them as individual employees in mind, they'll do amazing things for the mission

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of the hospital. Well, Dr. Seth Kronenberg, so far so good. The reviews are in and seems like

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things are going pretty well here at Crouse. It's a fun time. It's an amazing time in our community with the tremendous growth with all of the industry coming in. And we know there's

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no solution for health care in central New York that doesn't involve Crouse Health. And we are

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in the fastest growing industry in the United States, probably the world, right? Healthcare,

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it's where it's at. Thank you. Thank you. This is awesome. Awesome series, and we're really excited

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to roll it out to the community. All right. Well, thank you. Take me to Crouse. Absolutely. For

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more information on what you're hearing on this podcast, go to crouse.org/carrie. The information in this podcast is not intended as medical advice. It's always best to check with your doctor.

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