



**SRMC proudly remains an independent community hospital** and is not being sold or controlled by any other organization. We are joining an independent network of providers to work together on improving our communities' health outcomes. ***The following article appeared in the Salem News on Thursday, August 30, 2018 addressing this topic and is reprinted with permission from the Salem News.***

## **SRMC CEO Explains New Partnership**

**By Mary Ann Greier, Reporter for the Salem News**

Salem Regional Medical Center joined Mercy Health's Clinically Integrated Network to strengthen the hospital's independence and increase the community's access to the services it provides, SRMC President/CEO Dr. Anita Hackstedde said Wednesday.

She also said loud and clear that the hospital remains a locally-operated independent community hospital - SRMC was not sold to Mercy Health.

***"Nobody's buying us - we're not for sale. We're committed to staying independent, but we do need to change to stay competitive, with the health care changes occurring nationally,"*** she explained.

Part of those changes demand more collaboration between the health care entities serving an area which would include Columbiana County and the Mahoning Valley, aimed at improving quality of care and reducing costs for patients by sharing best practices and data collection regarding insurers and Medicare. The idea is health care management for the population as a whole, moving health care beyond the walls of the facility.

To do that, Hackstedde said the providers have to come together to figure out the best way to manage chronic diseases and keep the community healthy through preventative care. A Clinically Integrated Network allows providers from different walks of life to develop a plan to help keep the population healthier.

She said smaller hospitals like SRMC don't have the resources to develop their own CIN, so three years ago, the decision was made to start searching for one to join. Mercy Health, which is headquartered in Cincinnati, is the largest health system in Ohio and developed a CIN under the name Mercy Health Select, which includes more than 2,700

providers, 24 hospitals, 114 skilled nursing facilities and 36 home health agencies in the network.

She said it only made sense to join Mercy Health's CIN since it operates in the region and includes a number of physicians in the area. The advantage is better health care at lower costs. For the hospital, it's a better situation because through the CIN, SRMC can demonstrate its value to insurance providers and get better reimbursements for services provided. She explained that narrow insurance networks only let in certain providers that can demonstrate value with high quality care at a lower cost.

To explain further, Hackstedde said membership in Mercy Health Select gives the hospital access to those narrow networks. In other words, more health insurance networks will include the hospital as a provider. For example, SRMC will now have access, effective Sept. 1, to health insurance exchange plans that didn't recognize the hospital before as a provider, such as Medical Mutual.

***"This is a very good decision for the hospital. This expands our access to patients and patient access to us,"*** she said.

All the providers in the area are working as a team to have this higher value. She said patients always have a choice of where they go and physicians can refer their patients to SRMC, including physicians at Prima, which just became part of Mercy Health.

She noted that ***"Mercy has no say in how we operate."*** SRMC remains an independent entity, just as it has for the past 100 plus years.

She also touted the care patients have been receiving at SRMC all along, saying ***"we do phenomenal in caring for our patients."***

A lot has happened in recent years at the hospital, including construction of the patient bed tower, the partnership with University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center to expand cancer care and the openings of the Orthopaedic Bone & Joint Center, new Outpatient and Pain Clinic Procedures area and expanded Endoscopy unit. But there has also been the closing of the hospital's maternity unit, the closing of Salem Women's Health Partners for obstetrics and gynecology and some hospital staff reductions.

***"The hospital has to make changes to stay competitive,"*** Hackstedde said, adding that the hospital must balance what the community needs and wants to keep the community healthy.

The hospital is one of the largest employers in the city, with 874 workers, many who live in the hospital's service area.

***"We're still a financially strong hospital. What we're trying to do is stay ahead of the curve. If we can do that, we'll be able to maintain our independence,"*** she said.