

Announcer:

In this episode of Tim Talk, Tim sits down with Northern Light Health's director of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Tim Dentry:

Thank you for joining us for Tim talk. I'm Tim Dentry, president and CEO of Northern Light Health. Through this podcast we hope to break down barriers and embrace diversity and focus on issues of racial, social, and medical justice. We want to listen and learn by tapping into the many voices of diversity that we have across our healthcare system and our state. This podcast provides a forum for our listeners to share an experience of growth toward a culture of Northern Light that cares for one another. Our guest today is Marwa Hassanien, Director of Diversity, Equity, and inclusion for Northern Light Health. Marwa has a strong background in education, and most recently served as adjunct faculty at university of Maine and Eastern Maine community college Marwa holds a mass Masters of Education and curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Also a Master of Science and linguistics, and is DEI that is short for diversity, equity, and inclusion certified by Yale School of Management and Cornell University. She is currently a doctoral student in literacy education at U Maine. Marwa, thank you for joining me today.

Mawra Hassanien:

Thank you for having me, Tim.

Tim Dentry:

Absolutely. So you know, we're going to get into your role here at Northern Light Health as Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in a second. And I just want to share with our listening audience how just grateful I am that you're part of our team. I could not believe our good fortune when we set out on our journey of really being transparent and really taking a stand and being with people on matters of diversity, equity, inclusion, and we said to ourselves, "Okay, we're setting a high standard, we're proclaiming a lot. Who's going to help us do all this work because it's multifaceted and the angels are in the details?" And so next thing you know, Paul Bolen says to me that someone applied for that position and now you're on our team. And I thank you for that so much. Could you share a little with us about yourself and what drew you to Maine and Northern Light Health?

Mawra Hassanien:

Sure. Thank you Tim, and I am very honored and humble to be part of the Northern Light Health family. I'm a first generation American and daughter of Egyptian parents who came to the US in search of the American dream. My approach to DEI is very much in line with my unique and diverse background. I'm not only an educator, but I'm also a Muslim American who is bilingual and bi cultural daughter of immigrants. I'm also married to a physician who was a previous J-1 visa holder who came to Bangor due to its status, being a medically underserved area. So I thoroughly understand how unconscious biases, discrimination and microaggressions often manifest themselves in our society. Sadly, I can easily see things from different perspectives and angles and through a DEI lens. I consider myself an ambassador and a champion of this great work being done here at Northern Light Health to embrace, promote, and advance social racial and medical justice as you've highlighted Tim in order to forge a path towards equity throughout our state.

Tim Dentry:

Thank you Marwa I can absolutely just add to that, if I may take that Liberty to do so, is again for our listeners, you've done that with such a caring style, and that's what I think you so much that's such a great fit. So could you share with our listeners more about your role here as Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and what you would like to accomplish? What's your vision?

Mawra Hassanien:

Absolutely. Oftentimes there is discomfort when engaging in meaningful dialogue, but we must get comfortable with being uncomfortable to address underlying systemic issues, relating to bias, inequity, and racism. I truly enjoy hosting our foundational DEI educational and discussion series and being on the DEI council alongside you and our colleagues and ensuring patient and staff satisfaction action. I want us to broaden our horizons, challenge our assumptions, and foster learning together as an organization, everyone here should feel respected, valued, included, and empowered.

Tim Dentry:

Very good. You know, what really struck a chord with me with what you just said was be comfortable being uncomfortable. And I can remember were several occasions when I would be asked to speak on behalf of Northern Light Health and what is our position on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and medical justice, et cetera, by our physician leaders and others, and as well as when we first formed DEI council that you were a part of from all across Northern Light Health. And I remember stating, and I still feel strongly about that to this day, that I want to be uncomfortable for a long time. And by that I mean that I don't want to feel in such a comfort zone that, "Oh, we've got this."

Tim Dentry:

Or heaven forbid we don't have any issues to deal with, or we don't have people to listen to or understand how people have felt when they've been on the receiving end of microaggressions, et cetera. I always want to feel just a little bit uncomfortable of, "Are we continuing to do the right thing?" And that includes listening to all voices as you and I have been talking about everyone, we have 12,500 colleagues and their families, so 45,000 or so is in what I consider to be the Northern Light family. And we wouldn't permit any acts of doing anything other than treating absolutely every family member as part of the family.

Mawra Hassanien:

Absolutely.

Tim Dentry:

And so that's what this entire movement, I'll call it a movement, is all about.

Mawra Hassanien:

Yes. And I love how you remind us to be uncomfortable and we never want to be it to the point of just being comfortable.

Tim Dentry:

Yes, yes. So in addition to all of the excellent work you're doing with education and awareness, and I really appreciate that, and I know that a lot of our staff have participated in that. We also have an exciting provider anti-discrimination policy. Let me pause on that for our listeners and give a bit of

background. So when we started this, this whole journey for diversity, equity, and inclusion, I started with multiple forums of listening sessions, and it would be people that joined our team within the last however many years or different geographic areas, different backgrounds, all sorts of diversity of people that I listened to. And that was one of the examples that I heard loud and clear from our staff was that a lot of times they were treated with less than respect by the patients and families they're caring for and to the point where they would expect to have a different caregiver just because of their heritage, religious background, ethnic background, color, et cetera.

Tim Dentry:

And I remember talking to the leader of Mass General Hospital, we have a clinical affiliation with, and I said, "What do you all do about that?" I didn't expect that there would be much that they would say. They have a very pronounced, profound policy of, we don't accept that. And we're going to show our staff that we have their back. And so that's why we did this. So I probably gave away a little bit of what you're going to describe, but I thought that was one of the real good things that we started off with right off the bat. So why don't you share with our listeners how it was take it, pick up the story sure. From where I just left off and what you're doing to raise awareness about it.

Mawra Hassanien:

Sure. You know, and you're absolutely right, Tim. It was clear that we really needed a core belief embedded system-wide and a system-wide policy and this great work was done to create the policy. It was reviewed by our legal team. And then Dr. Marwaha, our Chief Quality Officer, and I work together to continue to make improvements to it before it was finally approved by our DEI council. We've had system-wide training for all our leaders who were rolling it out to their staff members. We explained the rights patients have and do not have, which includes disrespecting the rights of other patients, families, and staff. We do not accept requests for substitution of care from providers or workforce members, as you described, based on social identity, characteristics of race and national origin, gender identity, disability, age, or sexual orientation. We understand that discriminatory statements often come from a place of fear and lived experiences, but it does not make them acceptable. Of course, we have a zero tolerance policy that we are committed to as an organization and we make it clear that discrimination and prejudice have no place here. Policy such as this one are truly an important part of our culture of caring and caring for one another.

Tim Dentry:

Great, thank you. And you know, it's also an example of actions that we are taking again, I'm reflecting back so much on the early days of this journey. When people said, "Tim put out a statement of what we're for and that kind of thing, equal treatment of all people, et cetera." And then one follow up from one of our colleagues was, "So what are you going to do about it?" So I think it's one thing to put out statements, but it's another thing to do things put them into action. So I'm glad that you highlighted that example. So Marwa you joined us after we start at the beginning of the Tim Talk podcast, but you've absolutely added your talents and expertise. And I can always count on you helping us with the quality of these Tim Talks, because it's very important to all of us. I would like our listeners know that you were on the editorial team for Tim Talk, therefore obviously, and you help us generate the content, find guests and the like, I think we have something interesting, I hope the listeners believe so over the next two weeks, do you want to share a bit about that?

Mawra Hassanien:

Absolutely. You know, and I have to say it has been so much fun working with this wonderful team and I'm extremely grateful to be part of this great project. Today's episode will mark the 24th episode produced to date. We have covered issues such as microaggressions, medical justice based on race, ethnicity, and LGBTQ+ plus status. We explored the history of systemic racism in medicine, and we tackle the stigma of domestic violence. There's so much more, and here is just a sample

Speaker 4:

Domestic violence doesn't discriminate in terms of socioeconomic class. I think for me, people who didn't know that I had been in a domestic violence situation would say, "Gee, I never knew that you were in that situation."

Speaker 5:

Smudging is a part of healthcare. Having elders involved is a part of healthcare, incorporating language. I consult to the Wabanaki Health and Wellness MAT program and one of the most popular groups for their MAT patients is beating group because everyone wants to beat. And it's amazing what people talk about while they're doing things with their hands.

Speaker 6:

Today, we're going to talk really about medical justice. And when you're talking about justice, you're really referring to the element of fairness when a physician or a provider, any provider, is making a medical decision, and these involve the fair distribution of scarce resources, new treatments, fairness in the decisions that you make for surgeries or procedures. And also at the same time, you have to uphold the applicable laws and legislations that you work within. So when you look at healthcare, Black patients are usually more likely to experience more complications than white patients.

Mawra Hassanien:

For the final two episodes of Tim Talk, we are putting together a highlight reel of some of the best and most memorable moments from our first year for regular listeners. It's an opportunity to catch up on some of the most critical points. And perhaps hear some things that you might have missed the first time and for our new listeners, it's a great way to get a summary of the year's discussions. Although we really encourage you to go back and listen to all the full episodes, which can be found at NorthernLightHealth.org/podcast.

Tim Dentry:

Thank you so much Marwa, is there anything else you would like to share at this point?

Mawra Hassanien:

I would just like to thank you for being at the helm of this wonderful work. You know, even prior to me joining Northern Light Health team and family, I've heard so many wonderful things about your work and your commitment to DEI. And I really want to say thank you for all of this amazing work that you're doing.

Tim Dentry:

My pleasure and thank you for being part of the team. So Marwa, thanks for sharing so much about the work you and the DEI council are doing. And thank you, our podcast listeners as well. As always until

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next time. I'm Tim Dentry, encouraging you to listen and act to promote our culture of caring, diversity and inclusion, caring for one another. Thank you.

Announcer:

Thank you for listening to this episode of Tim Talk. If you enjoyed this podcast, please join us again, June 10th for our next episode, which will begin a two part series of some of the best moments of the first year of Tim Talk.