Interview – Jackie Liberto

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Welcome Jackie.

Jackie Liberto: Thank you.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Great to see you and thank you for taking the time. Would you mind starting by telling us a little bit about your upbringing? How did you grow up? Where did you grow up? And what were the things that were important in your life as you were growing up?

Jackie Liberto: Well, I grew up in the suburbia of Detroit, so I am an automotive girl. I even went to an engineering school focused largely on the auto industry. I focused on industrial engineering but did not want to be part of the automotive industry. I was always drawn to health care because of the nature of helping people, being more people focused, and I felt that there were so many opportunities to help improve health care delivery.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Did you have a role model that you followed? Did you come up with the idea by yourself? How did it happen?

Jackie Liberto: I think often times things are about chance. I had no idea at the age of 18 that there were industrial engineers within health care that could fix operations. I went to a school that had a co-op program, so at the age of 18, I had the opportunity to work in a health care organization as an industrial engineering intern and fell completely in love with it.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: So that's very interesting. You came to it from the tough side. You were an engineer. You wanted to have a career that was based on science, applied science. It wasn't like you focused on philosophy or medicine or a typical approach to health care. You came on it because of the science of building health care.

Jackie Liberto: Yes, the technical aspect. I loved my anatomy class in high school. I always used to get in trouble with my teacher who was my track coach because I was taking pictures of the subjects
we were dissecting. I was always intrigued by that aspect, but didn't feel medical school was really something that met with my skill set and discipline, but yet I was very passionate about health care.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Awesome. So from there to deploying the largest EMR system in Florida for a health system didn't happen the next day, there must have been a few steps in between. But we can see a trajectory though. There was from very early on a balance between the opportunity to help with the health of your fellow humans and then at the same time kind of bring with you your toolbox with a lot of engineering IT, etc. Tell us a little bit more about that.

Jackie Liberto: When I was finishing my MBA I had a class that was IT focused taught by a professor who worked at EDS. We spent a lot of time talking about industrial engineering and principles about changing processes. The fact is that in most cases, particularly when you look at health care, the best way to change processes is through the technology. The technology gives you the vehicle to really excel into the next realm. I think the technology piece became very appealing because it's such a change agent in improving. From a personal connection it's a very selfish reason; it's to ensure that when I bring my family for care the providers have the right information, the most up-to-date information and are able to provide the best possible care. It's a little bit selfish in wanting to do this not only for mankind, but it's personal.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Well you live what you preach. You want to create the best health care because you want to live with the best health care and that's very appropriate. Tell us a little bit about the fact that there you are, you were 18 when you really engaged in that direction and I see the engineer side, I see the business side, the IT as a mechanism to achieve your goals. In the meantime you also got married, you had kids, tell us how that happened in your life. How did you manage to balance it all?

Jackie Liberto: How did I manage to balance? It's a constant balancing act. Well I got married shortly
after college. Met my husband in college, so we’re both engineers. We have two lovely little girls, 11 and 7. My oldest had a series of health complications and when I was 18 weeks pregnant, I was on the ultrasound table at the facility in which I worked, and was told that my baby had a condition where her heart and stomach were on the right side of the body and that she had a hole in her heart. I immediately stopped and said, wait, aren't they supposed to be on the other side? I was told to be quiet until they finished the study. From that experience, drove a passion about how we communicate with patients.

About a week and a half later, I had an ultrasound during which a provider told me that I should consider termination because the heart was so malformed she might not make it and if she did make it there would be a series of complicated procedures that would increasingly provide the opportunity for her not to survive. Somewhere within, I looked at him and I challenged him and asked him if he was a cardiologist. When he replied, no, I said then why are you telling me to terminate my baby based on her heart? So I believe very much in making sure that the specialists are there. I think a lot of patients don't have that. Forty-five minutes later, I was having an echo done where the cardiologist told us yes, she has flipped organs, but the heart fortunately was perfectly formed, just flipped. She had a moderate sized VSD. Worst case scenario she would require open heart immediately after birth.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: But most of the time it closes by itself. So she had situs inversus.

Jackie Liberto: She has complete situs inversus with mirror image dextrocardia.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Phenomenal. I'm sorry.

Jackie Liberto: That's okay, being in health care you know you are a little bit armed to ask the right questions.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: But the Jackie I recognize is the one that just doesn't take an idea of a decision for granted but will have the nerve and the courage to challenge it when it's not right.

Jackie Liberto: Thank you.
Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Where did that come from?

Jackie Liberto: I think a lot of it probably came from that experience.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: But before that?

Jackie Liberto: I'm the oldest of three girls. My two sisters are a lot younger. We didn't grow up in the best family environment so I would say I was always kind of the protector. I think it's sort of that innate environment you grew up in and then followed by some sequencing of events that sort of drive your passion.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: So, the challenge really gave you the opportunity to forge a character that would be able to cope with a lot of the things that you had to cope with in your career.

Jackie Liberto: I hope so.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: It's remarkable because we always want for our kids to have the best possible life and then a lot of what we learn though comes from challenges and difficulties that we encounter as we grow up.

Jackie Liberto: Absolutely. I'm always fascinated about that. I'm always fascinated about how it can shape you- which as a parent scares you half to death. Because you want to position your kids in the best light so you hope you're doing something that puts them in the best light or leverages their talents and capabilities.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: And at the same time you don't want to take- to eliminate all the challenges because you want some of them to be challenges that they confront within. They have to grow their character right? But I clearly see a pattern now. And so you got married, you had your two wonderful daughters, you are a family of women aren't you?

Jackie Liberto: We are. My sister just had the first boy in our family two weeks ago. We're not really sure what to do. Changing the diaper was an issue. I wasn't up there but we were Skyping and I got to
see firsthand how challenging it was.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: That's great. So you know I have three boys, I can tell you it's just fine. They just fight. You won't have a problem. So at what point did you go to work at Beaumont in your career?

Jackie Liberto: At 18.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: So you really started very early there.

Jackie Liberto: Very early.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Beaumont is really in the private not-for-profit hospital business. A real model for how it can be done right.

Jackie Liberto: It's a great place to work.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: So that was really a great way for you to evolve your medical acumen in the area that you were focused on. How quickly did you move to become a leader in that environment?

Jackie Liberto: In that environment, I would say I finished up my internship: The program that I went to was a little bit complicated in the sense that it was a cooperative program right from the age of 18. So you worked for three months, went to school for three months, worked for three, went to school for three and that consisted of your year. At the end of your fifth year you were required to write a thesis for undergraduate. So you graduated with a written thesis and two-and-a-half years of practical work experience. I wrote my thesis while I was going to school so I could graduate a little bit earlier. I graduated about six months earlier and took an opportunity with a leadership team as an analyst that went out to an affiliated hospital. The hospital was run by a group of Felician Sisters, a very different work environment that allowed us to work for Beaumont and then in essence do management consulting. So certainly through that role, out of college having been given that opportunity, I was the
only full time analyst. Then from there came back and did a stint at Beaumont within the Department of Pathology for about eight months, looking at it from an administrative perspective and an operations perspective, the running of that department at one of our hospitals. Then from there went into IT and led projects from ERP implementations to a revenue cycle implementation to payroll to all of those various systems.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: And so was it in the Department of Pathology that you really started working with doctors?

Jackie Liberto: Oh no, I started working with doctors at the age of 18. One of the first studies that I did as an industrial engineer was establishing productivity guidelines for physicians in an emergency department.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Wow. That's a crazy way to start.

Jackie Liberto: It was a lot of hands on. So it was always a partnership, you know? An understanding, right from age 18, which was hard, as a young inexperienced person who two weeks before that had finished high school.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: That's amazing.

Jackie Liberto: So I tend to not take the easiest path.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: That's good. So did you enjoy the medical environment the way you had anticipated?

Jackie Liberto: I loved it. You know what I love the best? I love the best at the end of the day when I sat around with my peers and they talked about the widget that they were getting off the line faster or how much time it was taking or the new car elements that were coming out of the automotive city. I loved the fact that I could explain to them and to my grandmother, you know when you go to the emergency room and it takes a really long time? I help reduce that time. And I help make it more
efficient for the patients.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Awesome.

Jackie Liberto: So I love that aspect.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: That's great. And of course it's also quite connected with what you're doing here because in addition to deploying the largest EMR in Florida for medical centers you also focused very strongly on creating a culture of patient centricity. And that probably is that other aspect of you, right? Where you want to not only bring the tools so that people can become more efficient but also emphasize the importance of patient centricity and to create a fulfilling experience for the patient when they come for their care in the institution where you work.

Jackie Liberto: And I think that I'm very passionate about our UCare initiative.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Can you tell us what it means?

Jackie Liberto: UCare stands for you can achieve real excellence. Sustaining a patient centric culture around accountability. I'm very passionate about it. Largely because the experiences that I had as a patient in health care, because of the need to make it better and the desire to make it better, because also as health care workers I think it's important to us to always connect the why. It's not just why, the clinical outcomes and wanting the clinical outcomes to be good, or service to be good but I think people in general are drawn to health care for a reason and why is it important to them. When we're doing the IT systems and when we're meeting with the IT team, a lot of times we will talk about it not in the sense of what the technical aspect of getting from point A to point B but how would you feel if this was your record? Or your spouse’s record? Or your child's record and the information wasn't there. So I think that's the other element that UCare brings. It helps us remind ourselves of why we're in health care.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Yeah, and throughout that whole experience what is the greatest
satisfaction that you got out of it?

**Jackie Liberto:** Out of UCare or IT?

**Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.:** First the IT.

**Jackie Liberto:** For IT, I just had this conversation. We've changed not only the culture of our organization and what we do, but we've changed how we process things as an IT organization. So while it's been great and a whole team effort with rolling out the EMR to watch the methodologies, the thought processes, the guidelines we established be incorporated into the way the analysts do things moving forward has been the most rewarding.

**Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.:** What was the biggest surprise?

**Jackie Liberto:** The biggest surprise was a pleasant surprise in the pure dedication of the people that are here put forth to do it.

**Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.:** Why do you think that's the case? Besides the fact that you're a great leader.

**Jackie Liberto:** I think people are drawn to health care for a reason and I think sometimes we forget that. I think that when you can dust that off a little bit and they feel that you’re doing something for the greater good, it's really important.

**Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.:** And I think that your ability- the fact that that's the reason why you're in health care and the fact that it transpires into everything that you do is probably a great way to accentuate if you want that tendency that people may have when they go into health care. You know a lot trying to figure out why not. But then oh wow, yeah this is really important and cool and necessary and life saving and, so on. Then you have a very dedicated group of people that actually are willing to go beyond the call of duty to do the things that need to be done. That's remarkable. But I think that leadership quality that you have to really communicate very effectively the overarching goal. Forget
the cables, forget the computers, forget the screens, forget the software, the hardware, etc. Just remember the one thing and that is at the end of the day it's what you bring to the patient that really counts.

Jackie Liberto: Absolutely. Without a doubt. And I think it's something we can all relate to. And make that connection. And that's what's really important, to have a team that gets that what they're doing is worthwhile work with this incredible effort. At the end of the day to see these changes and to see how it can impact even how their own family receives care is important.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: One thing that also amazed me to be honest with you is the fact that you actually get traction with doctors. And I'm not saying this in a pejorative way at all. I'm just saying that in prior experiences, that was the most challenging part of what had to be accomplished is to make sure that the physicians, the clinicians, when they were taking care of their patients were willing to adapt this new sometimes complex system and also spend the time and the effort, etc. to make it work. So how did you do that?

Jackie Liberto: I have a tremendous amount of respect for providers. I think you have to take a look at the world of providers and the way that you deliver care is changing so dramatically. The inundation of information that comes at providers is staggering. I want to do everything that we can to give them the best vantage point to get back to providing clinical care. It's a partnership. There are some things that yes, it's the way that it is, and it's not great, but in the end, if you can tie that back to what's in it for them and caring for patients, that's what's important.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: And tell me if you have to tell your greatest challenge throughout the whole experience, what would it be?

Jackie Liberto: Managing stress. Managing stress such that you don't transfer that stress as a leader to your team. And helping to systematically approach things, pull emotion out of things so that you can be
very systematic and pragmatic about problem solving because sometimes emotion can overwhelm and detract. I would say that's probably the largest challenge in anything, especially when you're doing it in a very fast time frame with a limited number of resources.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: No question with limited resources. You're great- you're a phenomenal leader.

Jackie Liberto: That means a lot coming from you.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: You're also a great mother. I mean I saw you in the middle of this whole thing. We had a little event where your daughter decided to give her hair for Locks of Love and you were there and you were not only maternal to her, etc. How did you manage in the middle of that stress to do the right thing for your family?

Jackie Liberto: Well, because I'm a mom first. Right?

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Yes, that's true.

Jackie Liberto: I'm a mom first. And I think it's no different than role modeling for your team, role modeling for your kids that you can have it all. My kids have this feeling of they can do anything. They can have the family, balance that. I am also homeroom mom for my fifth grade daughter. Which in the technology age becomes a little bit easier, but you know how you balance. I think that's a really interesting dynamic that my generation deals with is the balance between career and family and wanting to do both things. You look at how the dynamics of the working woman has changed recently.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: Well let me tell you, you are definitely the total leader.

Jackie Liberto: Thank you.

Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.: It happens that from time to time I've had the opportunity to do something I love to do and that is to tell you that on behalf of the University of Miami, the Miller School of Medicine and UHealth, the health system of the University of Miami, I thank you for
everything that you do.

**Jackie Liberto:** I appreciate it. And I think you are an incredible leader.

**Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.:** I hope you are going to continue to do it for a long, long, long time. Thank you.

**Jackie Liberto:** We've got a lot of work to do.

**Dean Pascal J. Goldschmidt, M.D.:** Awesome, great. Thank you very much.