



## **An interview with Sandy Stephens, CEO of Select Specialty Hospital – Houston West**

**Q: Your hospital has a long-standing tradition of delivering very high quality care. Why is that?**

**A:** We are very proud of that fact. The answer is our staff. Every day I see the dedication on their faces when they walk in our door and head to their patients' rooms. Quality care is a personal mission for each of them.

**Q: But there must be more to it than that. Your ventilator weaning rate, for example, was extremely high in 2011. As I understand it, weaning patients off these breathing machines can be very difficult. What can other providers learn from you?**

**A:** I think it comes down to the work ethic, skill and professionalism of our caregivers. In our case, we have a work culture that prizes high-quality outcomes above all else. That means we are focused on patients' needs first, and it shows. In the greater Houston region, our specialized model is well-known. We are always proud to tell patient families that most pulmonologists and wound care doctors would say, and do say, that we are simply one of the best and that their patients should come here. Our standards are that high.

**Q: How is your hospital different from a regular, general hospital?**

**A:** First of all, we couldn't do what we do without general hospitals. They are the first stop in the continuum of care and in every way, we are their partners. In a sense, we are like an extension of an intensive-care unit of a general hospital. Our type of patient is usually critically ill, but needs a longer stay than an intensive-care unit can provide. So for a specific group of patients, the larger hospitals stabilize them, but when they need a longer period of time to move to the next stage of recovery, we step in. We are usually called a Long-Term Acute Care Hospital. That's a mouthful, but it means that we are a much smaller type of hospital and offer deep specializations in very specific types of conditions, such as terrible wounds or traumatic brain injuries, strokes and respiratory care. That also means that we offer a high-resource approach to patient care. In other words, we have very high ratios of care-providers to patients. We form large, multi-disciplinary teams of caregivers to tend to a single patient, and we use everything at our disposal to get them better. Sometimes patients are far too sick to respond to even this stepped-up approach, but happily, the vast majority of our patients do recover. That's what keeps our staff going every day.