

Inside ^MHealthcare

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The Pulse of Healthcare Leadership

View to a

Dream

Learn how Stanford Hospital's leaders are creating a greener hospital using actual greenery.

PAGE 43
CRITTENDEN REGIONAL HOSPITAL
Strategic partnerships with Meridian Leasing and Meridian IT Inc. plays a major role in helping this hospital deliver the highest quality care.

Crittenden Regional Hospital

Strategic partnerships play a major role in helping this regional hospital deliver the highest quality care to its patients and its community.

Bridge to Better Care



Jamie Carter,
president and CEO

The ability to deliver quality healthcare depends on more than the physicians, nurses, and hospitals that provide it. Strategic relationships also play a key role, and Arkansas-based Crittenden Regional Hospital can speak to their importance extensively.

Since 2005, Jamie Carter has been president and CEO of this 152-bed regional hospital and pinpoints two ways in which partnerships have enabled his hospital to maintain a high level of success for 57 years. One, which is of primary importance to him, is how partnerships with key vendors

equate to the type of quality offered at a healthcare facility.

"If you don't obtain high-end products that have been set up against your vendors' quality benchmarks, you can't deliver the quality," he said.

The mission at CRH, he continued, is excellence in patient-centered care. The relationships the hospital has with its vendors feed into that. By drilling down to the point of the

www.crhwm.org
HQ West Memphis, Ark.
Employees 585
Services General acute care facility with 152 beds

products they sell and matching them with CRH's needs, the hospital can keep its focus where it needs to be: on the patients.

Taking on risk

Carter's second point, and one that is increasingly more compelling as the nation's financial crisis continues to build, is the financial pace of the hospital/vendor relationship, leveraging the pricing on products with key vendors so they can be a financial partner in taking on some of the risk.

One shining example of this is CRH's relationship with Siemens and its energy-savings program. Many of the hospital's support systems (HVAC, boilers, etc.) had been in place since the 1960s. When looking to upgrade, Siemens' guaranteed energy-savings program seemed like the perfect fit.

CRH spent roughly \$2 million renovating heavy equipment, from chiller systems and chill water pumps to coolant towers and boilers. As a guarantee, Siemens takes a snapshot of the meters before the energy-saving equipment installation and predetermines the savings in its clients' utility bill. If the savings proposed do not happen, Siemens will "true up" those payments for its client.



"With the slim margins we work on in the healthcare industry, every dollar we can squeeze out of our system, such as equipment replacement, brings value and benefit the organization," Carter said.

Move with the market

In the case of business partner Meridian Leasing, CRH taps into both the financial benefits that come from the volume-driven relationship and the IT benefits. When Carter arrived at CRH three years ago, the hospital was far behind the times. "We didn't have voicemail or e-mail," he said. "Everything was paper."

The need to upgrade IT brought CRH to Meridian's table, but Meridian's due diligence is what kept the hospital there. Rather than offering a widget as a possible solution, Meridian came to the hospital, learned what was needed, and tailored its offering to the needs of CRH.

As the hospital continues to update its technology and major medical equipment, Meridian is a key leasing partner. Rather than going down the path of only offering capital leases, at the end of which the hospital owns the product, Meridian also offers operating leases, through which the hospital can either pay the residual balance on its lease or turn in the piece of equipment to get the newest version.

"Technology changes so rapidly that having these options makes us more agile in responding to the market and allows us to upgrade equipment to better meet the needs of our physicians and ever-changing medical technologies," said Carter. "Meridian can move with you to provide cost savings and to ascertain your critical demands."

Immediate impact

CRH has also developed a partnership with Methodist University Hospital, which is part of the Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare system. The joint Stemi (segment elevation myocardial infarction) project was developed to shorten the timeframe between when a patient is identified and transferred from CRH to another facility's ED, most likely its cath lab.

Working with Methodist University, CRH shortened the door-to-balloon time in the cath lab by opening the channels of communication. "If we identify a patient with a Stemi and they fall within the protocol, that patient is shipped directly to the cath lab at Methodist University," said Carter.

The two hospitals also involve ambulance agencies in West Memphis to ensure a speedy turnaround time for moving a patient from CRH to Methodist University. In late September,



Carter said two patients qualified for the project, and the hospital saw a dramatic decrease in the door-to-balloon time in the cath lab at Methodist University that saved both patients' lives.

"You see an immediate impact for participating with an organization like that," he said.

CRH has developed partnerships with hospitals in Memphis, such as St. Francis, the Methodist Healthcare System, and the Baptist Memorial Hospital System.

Carter said the days of hospitals being everything to everyone are gone, and because CRH does not do heart or brain surgery, developing close relationships with nearby hospitals gives

confidence to patients and their families that CRH will do everything in its power to provide excellence in patient-centered care, even if it's not within the walls of CRH itself.

"If you take that expectation seriously and want the best for patients and their families, you want them to have that same experience at the next healthcare facility, and these key relationships make it possible," Carter concluded. +

—Amanda Gaines

MERIDIAN

Meridian is a customer-focused company offering IT solutions and financing. We serve as a one-stop source for solutions that are always delivered on time and on budget. Meridian works closely with Crittenden's executive team, providing assistance with financial, medical, and technical expertise to help them meet strategic goals. Meridian has also contributed to their major fundraising event, Tour de Heart.

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