Partners in Transformation

Strategic partnership helps medical center succeed with rapid expansion.

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—Michael D. Israel, FACHE
President/CEO
Westchester Medical Center Health Network
Valhalla, N.Y.

Transforming from a three-hospital provider specializing only in tertiary care to a 10-hospital system, including a vast primary care network, is no small feat. Doing so in today’s unprecedented healthcare climate—and all in the past 18 months—is truly an accomplishment.

That is the journey Valhalla, N.Y.-based Westchester Medical Center Health Network (WMCHealth) embarked upon to expand services, transform and improve care, and better meet the needs of the communities it serves throughout the Hudson Valley region.

As WMCHealth began this transformation, the organization needed a strategic partner to help address the complex challenges that would arise in its quest to expand and deliver care more efficiently across the region.

“In less than two years, we went from 643 hospital beds in one county to nearly 1,700 beds across eight counties,” says WMCHealth COO/CFO Gary Brudnicki, an ACHE Member. “Our needs have changed and developed to the point where we need to address integration activities both on a clinical and nonclinical basis throughout this major network that has now been developed.”

The health system, which has had a long history with Philips dating back to the 1990s, entered into a 15-year strategic business alliance with the company in June 2015. The alliance with Philips offers WMCHealth a structured platform bringing managed services, technology, analytics and operational consulting support to the table.

WMCHealth’s incredible expansion came about at a time when the healthcare environment was changing across the entire state of New York. “In just four short years, our region—the New York metropolitan area and the Hudson Valley in particular—changed dramatically,” says WMCHealth President and CEO Michael D. Israel, FACHE. “Today, there are only a few independent community hospitals left in this region.”

In addition to these regional changes, the healthcare landscape is changing on a national level, transforming in ways that are making an impact on how providers deliver care—and to whom. “As more markets move toward value-based care, it’s even more important for Philips to provide strategic solutions and help customers determine how to deliver care efficiently and effectively in different care settings, particularly for organizations like WMCHealth that are growing their business and have to consider a wider population,” says Roger Weems, vice president/lead partner, healthcare transformation services for Philips, and an ACHE Member.

Planning for the Future
To prepare for the healthcare landscape of the future, WMCHealth is working with Philips on several enterprise-wide initiatives.
One major initiative is the introduction of telemedicine, which started in fall 2015. Use of telemedicine is helping WMCHealth expand high-end services to remote campuses within the system that do not have the infrastructure to provide such services.

“When we introduced telemedicine, we didn’t reduce existing clinicians in any of our institutions; rather, we added another layer of oversight for managing patients and brought a level of care out into the communities where it may not have previously existed,” Brudnicki says. He cites an example of expanding psychiatric services via telemedicine to the residents of Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

WMCHealth has also been working with Philips to improve patient flow in its cardiac catheterization labs. “Philips came up with some very significant suggestions—all data-driven—to redesign and reflow patient throughput, affecting a number of routines in those labs,” Brudnicki says. The redesigned workflows have improved staff and patient experience while also improving capacity in the busy labs.

The organization also has recently financed and designed a new, 280,000-square-foot ambulatory care facility. Philips assisted with the facility and patient experience design and will have a role in its construction.

Another key item on WMCHealth’s agenda is its participation in New York’s Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment program, aimed at restructuring the healthcare delivery system by reinvesting in the Medicaid program and redesigning the way care is delivered to the state’s Medicaid population. WMCHealth received a five-year, $274 million grant to put its DSRIP program in place.

Philips is working to help develop an IT infrastructure for this major population health management undertaking.

Strategic Partners
These are just a few of WMCHealth’s many initiatives to expand high-quality care in its region. As the journey continues, WMCHealth’s executive leadership and Philips know strategic partnerships will be essential for success.

For Weems, it is about suppliers and providers working together to navigate the future of healthcare. “Given all the mandates for change, there really is not one organization, whether it’s on the provider side or the technology side, that has all the answers,” he says. “To make this partnership work, companies like Philips have to fundamentally change the way we do business, just as healthcare providers like WMCHealth also need to adapt to the evolving business models. If you take a realistic look at what has to happen in the industry, suppliers can only continue with long-term success with partners on the provider side.”

WMCHealth’s Israel says that for a partnership to be successful there must be aligned goals. “In a true partnership, both sides have to benefit, goals have to be aligned and the partnership must be continually monitored to ensure all key performance indicators are being met and both partners are receiving appropriate feedback to modify their behavior to better fit the goals of the organization,” he says. “Philips is the only company I have seen in my nearly 40-year career that has really tried to redesign itself to meet the needs of its partners.”

For more information on Philips Healthcare Transformation Services, please visit www.philips.us/healthcareconsulting.