

The Regional Medical Center Takes Clinical Engineering in Positive New Direction through ISS Solutions



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Snapshot

Company: The Regional Medical Center

Headquarters: Orangeburg, SC

Business: A 286-bed healthcare organization offering compassionate acute care to people in South Carolina’s Orangeburg and Calhoun counties.

Overview

Challenge: Increase healthcare organization’s clinical engineering efficiency and service quality.

Solution: Implement cost effective, well-managed clinical engineering program from specialty healthcare technology company ISS Solutions.

Benefits:

- Provided smooth transition to outsourcing
- Corrected inventory disorganization through innovative approach
- Saved the Regional Medical Center \$300,000 annually
- Improved quality of clinical engineering services

Outsourcing can be scary, especially for healthcare organizations that have always run their own programs.

After years of running an in-house clinical engineering program, the Regional Medical Center (RMC) in Orangeburg, South Carolina, took a fresh look at its own expertise—delivering quality healthcare, not managing and servicing complex medical equipment—and decided to try outsourcing. With the expectation that this action would both increase the quality of clinical engineering services for their organization and push costs down, RMC signed a contract with ISS Solutions, the highly-recommended specialty healthcare technology lifecycle management business owned by Geisinger Health System.

ISS Solutions is now the full-service contractor to RMC’s 286-bed hospital and seventeen additional facilities, which span forty miles from the hospital and include more than 4,000 pieces of biomedical and imaging equipment. From preventative maintenance and repairs to new equipment purchase advising, inventory management, and outside vendor contract negotiation, ISS Solutions is handling it all with poise and good service. “ISS Solutions is excellent at what they do,” said James Wheeler, Director of Engineering for

RMC. “It doesn’t matter what type of issue it is or when it occurs. They are prompt and thorough, and they provide impeccable service.”

Provided smooth transition to outsourcing

Mr. Wheeler was clear on the reasons why RMC’s clinical engineering program needed a boost. From his perspective, “We were looking at outsourcing because our clinical engineering shop was in a state of disarray. Leadership was bad; the staff morale was in the dumper,” he said. “Our administration felt that something had to change.” RMC decided to outsource their in-house clinical engineering program to improve cost efficiency and productivity, as well as to increase customer service.

Not everybody was as convinced about outsourcing clinical engineering, but they warmed up to the idea once they saw the sensitivity with which ISS Solutions integrated into the healthcare setting. Sandy Elliott, Nursing Director of Surgical Services for RMC, appreciates the benefits that ISS Solutions brings because they honored RMC’s vision and experience while making needed management changes to address issues. Ms. Elliott found it helpful that ISS Solutions’ resident manager for RMC hired previous RMC technicians. “This is a community hospital,” Ms. Elliott explained. “Working our knowledge base and our history into their service plan was a valuable benefit. I’m glad

ISS Solutions recognized the value of our community members and kept our technical team in place."

ISS Solutions subtly implemented changes in processes and attitudes to fix the problems that administrators had highlighted. ISS Solutions' transition into RMC's corporate culture was so seamless that Ms. Elliott noted, "As far as what we would see day-to-day, there was no noticeable transition."

Corrected inventory disorganization through innovative approach

"Prior to ISS Solutions coming on board, clinical engineering was one of my biggest issues because of service maintenance and unable-to-locate equipment," said Mr. Wheeler. Before collaborating with ISS Solutions, RMC was missing and not properly servicing an unacceptable number of pieces of medical equipment. By taking action, ISS Solutions has improved this important measure by 90%. "They made the inventory process less painful by bringing in extra workers to lend a hand," noted Mr. Wheeler. ISS Solutions also implemented an innovative equipment tracking approach to help keep the inventory optimally organized.

Having everything in order was useful in summer of 2012, when The Joint Commission evaluated RMC. The Joint Commission was impressed with RMC's clinical engineering program, because ISS Solutions expertly managed the facility's medical equipment and maintained accurate databases.

Saved RMC \$300,000 annually

From the very beginning, ISS Solutions provided reasonable prices for RMC, making the switch to their services all the more appealing. Mr. Wheeler explained that even prior to being awarded a contract, ISS Solutions deployed a team of biomedical, imaging and management experts to understand and analyze RMC's unique requirements, inventory and cost-

savings goals. "Negotiating the contract terms and price went very well because ISS Solutions' team became intimately involved with our equipment database, what we had, and how we could achieve what we needed to do," said Mr. Wheeler.

The money savings in the service contract was just the beginning. All over RMC, ISS Solutions took cost-efficiency to the next level. When a sterilizer went down, ISS Solutions' on-site team leader quickly diagnosed and fixed the problem. "The sterilizer is running better now than when it was originally installed. To me, that's a savings of about \$100,000 just for that one piece of equipment," marveled Mr. Wheeler. ISS Solutions uncovered further savings for RMC by canceling an expensive endoscopy service contract. Ms. Elliott explained, "ISS Solutions is now maintaining flexible endoscopes, saving us \$80,000 per year by meeting that particular need of ours."

Managers around the healthcare organization noted that ISS Solutions was very good at helping to balance and plan their budgets. Mr. Wheeler also noted that the more efficient service means paying less overtime and replacing less equipment, and ISS Solutions' competitive advantage helps to drive down other contracting rates. He quoted an external consulting service's report on hospital-wide savings due to ISS Solutions: "The engineering department has saved up to \$300,000 annually with the switch."

Improved Quality of Service

For a healthcare organization that strives to "Passionately Put the Patient First", it was painful to see lower patient satisfaction rating, but also scary to imagine outsourcing any part of their compassion-based service organization. "We were worried when we heard that a company was coming in to take over clinical engineering that we'd only see people whenever preventative maintenance was due," admitted Ms. Elliott. "But that hasn't happened. From ISS Solutions, we're

still getting all the support we need to keep things running every day and that was a nice surprise."

Employees at RMC have only good tales to tell about the service they have received from ISS Solutions. Whether ISS Solutions is speaking with the vice president of an Original Equipment Manufacturer about issues with a laser and getting its warranty extended or rapidly responding to an urgent repair job within just a few minutes, the story is the same. "They're always friendly when I call with an issue," said Miranda Adams, Nurse Manager of the Operating Room and the CATH Lab. "We get a positive response, and they arrive as quickly as possible."

