



# Ambulatory Strategy

## Patient-Centered by Design

Sweeping changes in the healthcare industry—including the trend toward consumer-driven healthcare, changing reimbursement criteria, and innovations in delivery models themselves—are driving healthcare organizations to re-think what it takes to lead in competitive markets. Increasingly, patient experience is the differentiator.

University of Minnesota Health (M Health) had the opportunity to put patient experience at the heart of its ambulatory strategy when it designed and built its on-campus clinics and ambulatory surgery center. The Clinics and Surgery Center (CSC), which opened in February 2016, presented the opportunity to move away from dated historical precedents and truly rethink how care is delivered. Goals included:

- ◆ Focusing on patients as consumers
- ◆ Transforming care and experience for the future
- ◆ Attracting new patients who are looking for convenience
- ◆ Increasing access to multispecialty practice and clinical research capabilities
- ◆ Redesigning operations to reduce costs; consolidating services in a smaller footprint for better use of a fixed asset
- ◆ Increasing access by extending hours and increasing patient capacity

The strategy is part of M Health's ongoing efforts to elevate care and increase volumes while reducing cost. Operationally, the CSC met efficiency and value criteria by:

With financial and operations discipline at its foundation, M Health focused on developing and delivering a patient experience unparalleled anywhere in the region. Bringing the patient-centered vision to life required a new way of thinking—reimagining everything from technology and facility design to care models and workflows.



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### Warm Technology

Drawing inspiration from the retail, travel, and hospitality industries, M Health embraced consumer technology to deliver a patient experience that promotes personalization and convenience.

Understanding that the experience begins before patients even arrive on site, M Health adopted a pre-appointment management and e-check-in model that uses MyChart to allow patients to check in from home and complete questionnaires up to two weeks before scheduled appointments. Patients can also use MyChart to view test results and request or cancel appointments. MyChart is even available in a free, secure mobile app for iPhone and Android users. Initial data shows that patients who use e-check from home spend less time in the waiting room and more time with their care providers compared with those who don't.

The pre-appointment management approach also allowed M Health to upgrade its check-in process. Upon arrival, patients are greeted by a patient concierge who uses a hand-held tablet to confirm check-in and help patients complete any necessary records updates. The system allows CSC staff to approach patients in a welcoming and confidential manner and eliminates the need for a standard check-in desk.

Concierges also introduce patients to Care Connect, a real-time location system that connects patients, providers, and staff to improve patient flow and reduce wait times. Patients receive a Care Connect badge upon arrival and keep it with them throughout their visit. The badge is connected to a system that provides up-to-the-minute data, including room status, wait times, alone time alerts, and physician assistance requests. The system helps improve communication and coordination among providers, staff, and operations management. Reports can also be produced to evaluate patient experience trends and opportunities for improvement.

The CSC also features a Discovery Experience to incorporate research and innovation into the patient experience. Video monitors promote clinical trials and other research opportunities, and patients can use kiosks throughout the building to access StudyFinder, a website that will help them find relevant health research opportunities.

These warm technologies were selected specifically to enhance patient convenience and support human interaction in a more meaningful way, help patients feel more in control of their appointments, and create a more personal care experience.

### Operational and Architectural Design

By redesigning operations to reduce costs, M Health was able to retain and enhance its service offerings into a smaller footprint and make better use of a fixed asset, including savings of more than

\$67 million in capital costs. The five-story, 342,000-square-foot CSC focuses on ease, access, and value for patients. The facility combines more than 30 clinics and support services—including lab, imaging, and pharmacy—under one roof, bringing together patients, providers, and staff who previously were spread across 3 million square feet at five locations across campus.

One of the most significant operational and architectural design elements is the use of flexible, adaptable clinic modules that can accommodate changes in program development, best practices, and care innovation. Clinic spaces can be configured on a day-to-day basis to adjust for the number of patients who need a specific service. The flexible design and expanded hours allow twice as many patients to be seen as compared with previously dispersed locations with fewer exam rooms.

The CSC also houses an ambulatory surgery center with 10 operating rooms and six procedure rooms featuring state-of-the-art equipment, natural light, and close proximity to support services. Among those services is the Preoperative Assessment Center (PAC), where patients receive their pre-surgical health evaluations, allowing for more efficient scheduling, avoidance of surgical cancellations, and quicker turnaround times for completion of surgical procedures.

In addition to offering high efficiency, the CSC's facility design creates a welcoming environment for patients, using color and light to enhance a sense of calm and well-being. Brick and terra-cotta on the exterior complement the local landscape. Inside, patterns of stone and glass bring visual cohesion to balance the level of activity taking place. Color is used strategically in the space and the furniture to facilitate wayfinding, with different colors identifying different clinics and care neighborhoods.

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High priority was also placed on bringing medical, research, and education professionals together for seamless collaboration. The building is equipped with collaboration spaces where care teams and providers from one or more specialties or disciplines can meet to discuss patient care.

Contemporary workspace strategies further enhance collaboration and the in-clinic experience. Research showed private offices were empty 90 percent of the time, so the CSC features touchdown spaces and enclosed offices that can be reserved for periods of time, but are not designated for one individual. The touchdown spaces wrap around the clinic modules to support out-of-clinic work so that underutilized space can be reallocated for patient, provider, and staff amenities that take advantage of abundant daylight and views of the campus.

### Engaging Multidisciplinary Teams

Engaged employees are the single most valuable point of difference between average performance and excellence. So M Health partnered closely with internal communications, change management, and human resources to develop a

communications strategy that supported its business and operational goals for the CSC. The strategy focused on physician and staff engagement at all levels and at every point in the planning, design, and building process.

Physicians and staff were engaged early on to ensure cultural cohesion in the new facility. More than 250 providers and staff in cross-functional, interprofessional teams participated in workshops to design new workflows and processes, including:

- ◆ Pre-appointment management
- ◆ Patient arrival and check-in
- ◆ In-clinic experience
- ◆ Patient departure and checkout

The goal of the workshops was to totally reimagine the patient experience and create an environment that enhanced efficiency and convenience for both the patient and the care teams. Early results gathered through patient comment cards indicate that many patients love the new facility and the new workflows. The most common themes that have emerged

from more than 500 comment cards include friendly and helpful staff, beautiful facility, and great experience. Some frequently used phrases include “slick,” “easy,” “convenient,” “friendly,” and “better than before.”

Teams also were engaged to help plan and implement extended hours, making M Health the first health system in greater Minnesota to offer evening and weekend access to highly specialized medical care. The CSC is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays and from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Access is convenient for patients, opening up the opportunity to serve a more diverse patient population as well as a more profitable payor mix. Results to date demonstrate that the expanded hours have captured more new patients than daytime hours and a higher percentage of commercial pay.

### Continuous Learning

M Health's efforts to build an ambulatory strategy around patient experience have met with success on multiple levels, as well as some challenges.

Early success markers include lower costs for payers and patients because of the freestanding reimbursement model, lower staffing costs due to efficient design and workflows, and the attraction of new patients.

The breadth and depth of the changes also present an opportunity for continuous learning and improvement. Leaders, staff, and providers will continue to work together to manage the challenges of new workflows and technology and to engage in the kind of ongoing communication that connects and energizes teams. Patients also must continue to be part of the communication and feedback loop, and adjustments must be made to ensure the new experience meets their needs in a meaningful way.

**T**he CSC's facility design uses color and light to enhance a sense of calm and well-being for patients.