

Anesthesia Service Provider Responds to System's Expanding Service Market Needs

By Judy L. Marchman

Wise Health System's prior anesthesia services group didn't provide the necessary responsiveness to match the system's growth. With the main campus located in Decatur and various facilities across 11 counties, the system needed greater agility to better respond to its expanding service market while maintaining high-quality customer service and patient care.

"We were encountering difficulty in our ability to manage our growth and expansion from an anesthesia perspective," said Wise Health System Chief Operating Officer Leon Fuqua of the hospital's previous anesthesia service provider. "The staffing model in place made it a struggle to cover all of our surgical rooms."

Faced with such obstacles, Wise Health System decided to seek bids in the marketplace to find a new anesthesia services group. The system chose Georgia-based Premier Anesthesia, one of the largest privately owned anesthesia management companies in the United States.



FUQUA

Quick Turnaround

Established in 2002, Premier has worked with more than 150 hospitals across the country. Premier and Wise Health System partnered in August 2015 after a necessary quick turnaround.

"We had to have a new contract and providers in place as our prior contractor's service was ending on a given date," said Wise Health System CEO Stephen Summers, FACHE. "When a contract changes, you typically have a relatively short time frame. It can be a difficult task to get everything sorted out, but Premier worked really well with us to get it all done on time."

Wise Health System participates under Premier's turnkey outsource model in which the company installs a team on-site to evaluate the situation, understand the issues, and put together a goal and action plan to present to hospital leadership. The team includes a regional medical director, who works closely with hospital leadership and provides support to anesthesia providers and operations staff to ensure a smooth transition of services.

"We do six to eight conversions a year," said Kerry Teel, president of Premier. "Wise Health System has been one of the best groups we've worked with. We've been very impressed with its medical team and staff."

Retention of existing anesthesia providers is a key objective for Premier. Teel and his recruitment team try to make this process as efficient as possible.



SUMMERS



TEEL

"We try to complete this process in two weeks," Teel said. "We don't want good providers being anxious, and we don't want to disrupt what's going on."

In Wise Health System's case, Premier's recruitment team met with the chief registered nurse anesthetists both as a group and individually, with the result being that virtually all of the existing providers stayed.

"From the CRNAs' perspective, they feel very empowered now," Fuqua said. "They are respected and listened to; it's made a big difference for them."

Expanding Services

Premier's operating model also has provided Wise Health System with the flexibility and agility to make any necessary changes while knowing the costs involved upfront.

"We can count costs and know where we are going," Fuqua said. "The way the previous contract was structured, we weren't incentivized to go in a particular way. Now we are all going in the same direction."

The flexibility has paid off.

"We set record numbers at the end of last year. Working with Premier has allowed us to run every operating room every day," said Fuqua.

Wise Health System maintains nine ORs at its main campus in Decatur and operates four ORs at Parkway Surgical & Cardiovascular Hospital in Fort Worth. The system has plans for three more ORs to open this summer at the Bridgeport outpatient facility. In addition, a new hospital is being constructed in Argyle, north of Fort Worth, and is scheduled to open in 2017.

For health systems like Wise Health System that serve a broad area that includes rural communities, advances in health telecommunications are helping maintain and even improve the level and quality of patient services and care. Premier currently is working on a pilot program in Texas to develop a telehealth anesthesia network to make anesthesiologists available to hospitals that may not have one on staff or for consultations on surgery cases.

"For many rural hospitals in Texas, it would be a boost to have real-time consultations and interactions with anesthesiologists," Teel said.

With such rapid expansion of its service market, Wise Health System has appreciated Premier's agility not only in handling rapidly changing needs, but also in providing the progressive technology to do so.

"We have every reason to believe we will have a long and happy relationship with Premier," Summers said. ★

This sponsored section is underwritten by HealthSHARE. Premier Anesthesia is endorsed by the Texas Hospital Association. For more information, go to www.premieranesthesia.com.