

Case Study



St. Joseph's Health System: Collaborating to Raise the Bar

Why does a bariatric patient have to be stigmatized by sitting in the “obese person’s chair”?

Can a small cleaning person move a bariatric chair without injury?

How can we fit a nursing mother and infant or toddler into a single waiting room chair?

Products:

Furniture solutions for the entire healthcare complex including acute, elder and mental health care spaces

Looking for a Better Standard

Back in 2003, these were just some of the questions that Jay Ayres, Purchasing Director at the St. Joseph's Health System, Group Purchasing Organization was grappling with, and he didn't have a good answer for any of them because a robust and affordable furniture solution for the healthcare environment didn't exist. The status quo at that time was taking office furniture and trying to retrofit it into the healthcare environment. So he decided it was time to make an effort to raise the bar, specify and standardize a healthcare furniture offering. The St. Joseph's Health System Group Purchasing Organization is a national program that works together

with healthcare facilities, manufacturers and distributors to consolidate volumes and create effective purchasing opportunities for its members within over 400 healthcare facilities across Canada, including health centres, community hospitals and long term care facilities. From this position, Jay was well situated to upturn the industry norm.

Pooling Knowledge

Jay pulled together a diverse and representative committee of end users and experts to set the criteria to identify a partner who would help them implement universal healthcare furniture standards. The committee included facility management, nursing, ergonomists, designers, infection control, occupational therapists and purchasing agents and took into account a plethora of needs and patient populations that ordinarily hadn't been taken into consideration. For example, finishes that can withstand the chemicals needed to clean and sterilize them, chairs sturdy enough to hold people over 350 pounds, yet be able to be moved by a small person who will clean it, and desks that can withstand the punishing 24/7 abuse a hospital environment doles out.

They began their evaluation with an exhaustive audit of chair manufacturers. From that they chose 35 chairs and brought them in for testing by the people who would use them. These end-users recommended modifications and measured how the manufacturers responded to their requests. Global was the winner in this category. "Global's ability to listen and then communicate with our team was key to its success and it still is today", Janice Mount, Contract Specialist at St. Joseph's Health System explains.

Raising the Bar

After signing their first five-year Purchasing Agreement, both Global and St. Joseph's continued their collaboration and set to work developing a collection of purpose built healthcare products that covers everyone's needs from the front door to the back door of a health facility. A key element of this co-development is to be able to repair and upgrade furniture on the spot, to save each facility precious time and money. "The ultimate goal is the patient. That's what St. Joseph's stands for. And at the same, time it has to be something we can afford," Ayres explains. Input, evaluation and consultations were undertaken regularly throughout the process with all levels of staff, patients, and visitors providing feedback to the products and prototypes provided by the Global Design team.

"But we don't rest here," Janice continues, "In this environment things are constantly changing. Global constantly educates itself and responds to these changing environments fluidly and proactively. For example, Global has modified the stitching on its upholstery and the fabric used on its chairs to protect us against the latest threat that bed bugs and super bugs impose. "

Now, more than ten years and thousands of purchase orders later, Jay sums up, "together we've changed the industry" by raising the bar and developing a purpose built furniture line that is now available to the entire industry.



The Hamilton West 5th Campus embodies St. Joseph's vision to pioneer innovative models of care that will radically reduce stigmas and barriers associated with mental illness and addiction.

Primacare by GLOBAL care furniture is used throughout the facility.