



West Chester Hospital



West Chester Hospital was the first hospital to be built in Cincinnati in decades. The goal for the hospital was to make it “an exceptional healthcare experience” for patients. Thanks to the experience and expertise of their partners, including Herman Miller dealership Smith & Schaefer, the new hospital has a beautiful, comfortable environment that’s efficient and flexible, too.

HEALTHCARE;
CINCINNATI, OHIO

Topic:

*Brand,
Efficiency
Health*

Application:

*Healthcare: Administrative Areas
Healthcare: Emergency
Healthcare: Laboratory
Healthcare: Materials Management
Healthcare: Patient Care
Healthcare: Pharmacy
Healthcare: Surgical Services*

Project Scope:

*162 acute-bed hospital with 144
bed expansion; 390,000 square feet*

Herman Miller Product:

*Action Office® System
Casework
Co/Struc® System
Procedure/Supply Carts
Equa 2® Chairs
Nemschoff® SleepOver® Sofa*

Alliance Product:

*Eagle Group® Case Carts
Eagle Group Master Trak®
High-Density Storage System
Eagle Group Wire Shelving
SitOnIt® Freelance™ Chair*

Year Completed:

2009



Cincinnati's West Chester Hospital (WCH), formerly called West Chester Medical Center, is a "jewel" in Ohio's UC Health organization (formerly Alliance Health of Greater Cincinnati). It was the first new hospital to be built in the area in decades, and the goal was to create "an exceptional healthcare experience" for patients, one that represented all the best of what health care had to offer.

Furniture requirements for the hospital were not simple: modular, flexible solutions, lean efficiencies (VP of Operations Ron Rohlfig is a Lean/Six-Sigma Black Belt), and minority vendors. And everything needed to be done as cost-effectively—and quickly—as possible.

Mr. Rohlfig recalls that during the initial planning phase, "Our core team was very small, which is why it was critical to work with quality vendors who understand their products and could help guide us with their ideas."

EXPERTISE ADDS VALUE

Herman Miller dealership Smith & Schaefer began working with the WCH team two and a half years before construction started. "Their expertise increased our bandwidth significantly," says Mr. Rohlfig. "They brought a lot of value to the equation, working closely with us to identify solutions as we progressed."

One of the first hurdles the Smith & Schaefer team encountered was in the lab: Due to an error, casework had been built in where a modular system had been requested. "The West Chester team realized right away this wasn't going to work with the lean workflow process they wanted," says Kim Driskell, Account Specialist, Smith & Schaefer. "Plus, the lab had ordered two large chemistry analyzers that wouldn't fit with the casework layout, which only emphasized the need for flexibility."

FLEXIBILITY A "MUST"

The built-in casework was taken out and replaced with Herman Miller Casework modular lab furniture to give them flexibility. "Health care is such a dynamic, complex, process-oriented environment; things are constantly changing, which is why flexibility is so important," explains Mr. Rohlfig.

[left] Herman Miller's Co/Struc and Action Office systems offer flexibility to meet continually changing work space needs, while the Equa chair provides ergonomic comfort with minimal adjustment.

[right] Eagle Group Master Trak High-Density Storage System maximizes space, keeping supplies efficiently organized and within easy reach.



“As people work in these new spaces, they find different ways of doing things, maybe one way works better than another, so you have to be able to change things around at any point in the process,” agrees Mark Heekin, HermanMiller Healthcare Account Representative. He adds that “modular components also help with infection control because they are much easier to maintain and clean as you move them in and out.”

Another key solution for the hospital was the vast array of carts and shelving systems offered by HermanMiller Healthcare and its alliance partner, Eagle. As many hospitals are discovering today, carts are highly prized little workhorses.

- In **OR**, carts are used in a sort of docking station and hold specific surgical instruments as well as general supplies. Drawers can be accessed as needed, and filled and replaced afterward. “You just roll out the empty carts, replace them with filled ones, and they’re ready to go next time,” says Mr. Rohlfig.
- In **patients’ rooms**, “They’re great for the same reason,” he adds, “and they provide extra surface spaces so nurses don’t have to set down tools or supplies on a patient’s overbed table.”
- In **ER** and other areas, Crash (“Code Blue”) Carts come with color coded drawers so staff can quickly see where to reach for the right tools—especially in crisis mode. Color coding makes restocking easier, too.

HermanMiller Healthcare Clinical Strategist Gail Allen conducted in-service training to educate staff about the various products to ensure everything is being used as designed for maximum efficiency. “Lean is all about creating process efficiencies and reducing errors. Every step should add value to the patient experience,” observes Mr. Rohlfig.

PREPARED FOR CHANGE

Flexibility was also key in the office areas, where the Herman Miller Action Office 2 system was employed. “Our needs or functions often change in these spaces, too,” says Mr. Rohlfig. “For example, we recently changed one large office to more of an office suite for four people, which we could not have done with built-ins. From the beautiful cherry veneers to the standard finishes, the furniture is all high quality, functional, and changeable.”

[left] Co/Struc components on casters come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes to meet all kinds of storage needs and, unlike built-ins, offer complete flexibility.

[right] Co/Struc carts can be wheeled in and out of areas to restock supplies, making the process more efficient; the Equa stool easily adjusts for different heights.



In fact, the Herman Miller diverse offering provided solutions for nearly every area of the hospital. A Herman Miller company, Nemschoff, provided the sleeper sofa used in patients' rooms. "It's comfortable, it's attractive, it has a small footprint, and it's what I call 'clinically friendly' because we can use it to recline patients when necessary," states Mr. Rohlfig.

SEATING SUPPORTS CLINICIANS

Herman Miller Equa chairs, used throughout the hospital, are another winner, he adds. "In clinical care, you're on your feet a lot, and when you finally get to sit down, you want something that's comfortable and supportive. This is especially important with an aging workforce."

"Equa chairs and stools also have 'passive' ergonomics, which means there aren't a lot of levers that need to be adjusted every time the users change, which happens continually in a hospital with multiple shifts," says Driskell.

SitOnIt Freelance chairs were used for guest seating in the offices, small waiting rooms and break rooms. "This is a nice chair at a value price, and the hard-seat version is very cleanable, which is a big plus in the break rooms," she adds.

Another of the hospital's key objectives was to work with minority vendors, and Herman Miller was able to help out with that, too. "Not only does the company itself have a strong diversity policy, but we also have diversity requirements and programs in place for our own vendors, both first- and second-tier," says Michael Ramirez, Herman Miller VP of Sales Operations.

"Out of more than \$200 million, 19 percent of our overall spend was to minority contractors, which we were very pleased about," says Mr. Rohlfig.

"The Herman Miller diversity partner, Enriching Spaces, did an incredible installation job for us," he continues. "They really knew what they were doing. In fact, the whole effort was very collaborative, which was critical because of our extremely short timeline."

GREAT SERVICE CONTINUES

Mr. Rohlfig says he can't emphasize enough how important it is to partner with experienced, high quality vendors who will support you both before and after a project. "Smith & Schaefer

[left] Co-Struc modular storage tucks neatly in patients' rooms as does the Nemschoff sofa (near window), which is both comfortable and easy to clean.

[right] A variety of Herman Miller products work together beautifully in office settings, and all are modular for quick reconfiguration when necessary.

continues to provide service for us; when you're ordering 7,000 line items, not every single thing is going work perfectly. So having efficient processes in place to take care of those little things has been critical to us."

Overall, says Mr. Rohlfing, "It has been a very humbling experience for me to have played a role in a facility that has had so much impact in our community. Every day I walk into this building and feel immense pride because I know the patients and their families, who are often in difficult situations, are being made comfortable with great solutions. I have to say, too, that we're pleased we purchased American-made products. Partners like Smith & Schaefer and Herman Miller helped make it all happen. We could not have done it without them."

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