

# HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVE

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**Hill-Rom**  
A HILLENBRAND INDUSTRY

## Hill-Rom Helps St. Mary's Reduce Injuries

Through its value-added services, Hill-Rom not only delivers product solutions to its provider partners—it offers resources and support through its program solutions as well.

**"The difference between Hill-Rom and other companies is that they have the infrastructure in place to provide specialized support."**

**Sharon Ambrose**  
**Chief Operating Officer**  
**St. Mary's Hospital**

Prompted by initiatives to protect and retain staff, provide excellent care to patients, and reduce costs, St. Mary's Hospital in Huntington, W.Va., analyzed the number of work-related injuries that occurred in the hospital from 1996 to 1999. The hospital, with help from Hill-Rom—a Batesville, Ind., company that offers products, clinical process improvements, and support for healthcare providers—found that 66 percent of those injuries were related to overexertion of the back, shoulder, or neck that occurred when hospital staff moved or lifted patients. The number of missed workdays, workers' compensation, and other costs that could be attributed to the injuries were also calculated. From this data, the

hospital concluded that it needed to specifically focus on reducing injuries caused by overexertion.

To help reach this goal, St. Mary's, a 440-bed tertiary care referral center with more than 2,000 employees serving a tristate area, turned to Hill-Rom. While its long-standing relationship with Hill-Rom prompted St. Mary's to choose the company, the hospital also knew that Hill-Rom offered products—such as special ergonomic beds that can be automatically reconfigured into a full chair position with the press of a button—to target injuries related to overexertion. Hill-Rom's equipment is designed to minimize the risk to the caregiver while simultane-

ously provide an optimal environment for the patient's recovery. But what further prompted St. Mary's to choose Hill-Rom was that the company not only offered a *product* solution with its innovative equipment, it also offered a *program* solution to complement its products. In other words, Hill-Rom provided support and resources so that St. Mary's could maximize the benefits the new beds could offer.

As part of its program solution, Hill-Rom representatives met with St. Mary's nurse administrators to discuss unique features of the beds and other lifting equipment that could help reduce injuries to staff. Nursing leaders then examined the

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hospital's current procedures and existing equipment. Based on these discussions, the group created a process for using the new equipment. They then developed formal policies on equipment use for staff. For example, one element of the policy sets guidelines for determining when patients should be moved into a certain position—e.g., when they can raise one leg at a time from a seated position. "Basically, the policies detail how staff are to incorporate the new equipment into their care practices," says Rick Barker, manager, Caregiver and Patient Safety Programs, of Hill-Rom. "We focused on the why's of the policy as well as the how's in terms of using the equipment."

Once the beds and other equipment were selected and the new policies were in place, Hill-Rom conducted training in ergonomics awareness for all St. Mary's staff who directly handle or move patients. Staff learned

different techniques to help protect themselves from injuries on the job, tips for using the new equipment, and ways to practice effective body biomechanics. "A group of 'champions of ergonomics' was selected through each of the hospital units," Barker says. "They attended longer training sessions so that they could serve as resources for questions or issues that came up as the new equipment was being used."

One of the reasons Hill-Rom can provide such specialized training is that they have a clinical sales force—many of whom are trained ergonomics specialists or former nurses. "The difference between Hill-Rom and other companies is that they have the infrastructure in place to provide specialized support," says Sharon Ambrose, chief operating officer at St. Mary's. Hill-Rom believes that by providing value-added services, the company will cultivate partnerships with their clients. "I think hospitals have come



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to expect Hill-Rom to provide better solutions to meet the growing challenges in their facilities," says David Minning, director, Marketing and Program Development, for Hill-Rom. "When healthcare organizations open their data to us and let us understand what their challenges are specifically, we can do our best to provide the tailored solutions they need."

Hill-Rom furthers the notion of partnership by meeting quarterly with St. Mary's leaders to analyze equipment performance and decide what other approaches the hospital might want to pursue. In fact, Hill-Rom is so committed and confident in its ability to deliver tangible results that the company

entered into a risk-sharing agreement with St. Mary's. Through this contract, Hill-Rom guarantees that the hospital will save a certain dollar amount by reducing back injuries within a specified time frame. Right now, St. Mary's Ambrose estimates a 50 percent reduction in costs incurred through over-exertion injuries by year's end. "Hill-Rom and St. Mary's both benefit significantly from our arrangement," Ambrose says. "Through the ongoing evaluation and measurement, we can reduce injuries and they can build a successful program that can be implemented elsewhere. Most importantly, however, we are providing an excellent, high-quality environment for our patients and staff."