Intalere Nutrition Program and Assessment Bring Transparent Savings and Relevant Value to Blount Memorial Hospital

THE CHALLENGE

Since 1947, Blount Memorial Hospital has been providing healthcare close to home to the people of East Tennessee.

Blount Memorial is constantly changing to meet the healthcare needs of its growing community, and as part of that initiative is focused on efficiency and best practice in its operations, including foodservice.

As a community-owned, non-profit entity, Blount Memorial CFO Jonathan Smith, and Director of Food and Nutrition Jonathan Dean were looking for further ways to support the local community and its businesses. Part of this involved the ability to source products from local vendors and distributors. Because their foodservice agreement at the time was limited in this capacity, an opportunity opened to initiate discussions with Intalere and their partners.

Blount representatives contacted the distributor first seeking a local provider for their food. “Then Intalere came onto the scene and really blew us away with their customer-focused approach,” said Dean. Working with representative Dana Spiva, of Intalere affiliate Health Resource Services (HRS), who looped in Intalere Nutrition Specialist Roseann Hoeye, discussions quickly evolved based on positive feedback concerning the ability for the local vendor, distributor and Intalere to work together.

The team began to explore a broader scope around making sure Blount Memorial was maximizing patient satisfaction and the overall efficiency of their foodservice operation.

A SHORT TAKE ON SUCCESS

Challenge
Benchmarking and assessment to validate and bring efficiency and best practice in foodservice operations.

Solution
Engagement with the Intalere Nutrition Team for onsite assessment and related consulting, benchmarking and comprehensive recommendations report.

Outcome
Validation of short- and long-term plans, transparent pricing, and enhancement in operations and revenue opportunities.

"Intalere has brought us a suite of very high-level services that are easy to use, high quality and always customer focused."

Jonathan Dean, Director of Food and Nutrition, Blount Memorial Hospital
The initial relationship and synergy between Blount, the food vendor and distributor established and working well, the next area of value to explore became benchmarking. Explained Dean, “We were confident we were operating well in terms of revenue and service, but we wanted to validate our impressions, understand how we truly measure up against our peers and see where we might stand to improve.”

Blount Memorial Hospital requested Intalere to assess their foodservice operation around three key points:

- Benchmarking to understand the current level of economic and operational performance metrics.
- Patient satisfaction/operational assessment.
- Retail revenue optimization.

Through a “peer spectrum” review, Intalere assists members in achieving operational improvements and lower costs based on total purchasing volume, negotiated contracts and a focus on value-added tools and solutions. “These tools and programs have helped facilities achieve the greatest operational efficiencies, the lowest costs and helped boost retail revenues,” said Hoeye.

“What they were willing to do for us was impressive,” said Dean. “From the local vendor involvement we requested, to benchmarking, to patient service and retail operations, Intalere focused on bringing relevant value.”

The assessment proved extremely beneficial in setting the foundation for sustainable success for Blount’s foodservice operation. According to Dean, “In each area of our operation, we have good validation and a clear path forward to ensure we are as productive and profitable as possible.”

This included, on the patient side, food delivery and impression, and enhancing menu selection. Retail improvements included tangible suggestions to improve flow, choices and revenue.

In terms of food costs, of note was Intalere’s willingness to partner with the vendor and get creative on pricing and bring rebates in “real dollars,” which can be a particularly vexing issue for many foodservice operations.

“All recommendations were based on need and value applicability,” said Dean. “We walked out with relevant, actionable initiatives. It was all about things we can do better. There was no trying to ‘sell’ something.

Hoeye emphasized the Intalere program “is about a systematic process of well established disciplines to assist healthcare systems to leverage the total value of Intalere’s foodservice resources, achieve best demonstrated practices via operational efficiencies and realize measurable cost savings across their entire network.”

To the client, it means, as shared by Dean, “Intalere has brought us a suite of very high-level services that are easy to use, high quality and always customer focused.”