The Challenge
Special Tree Rehabilitation System (STRS) is a comprehensive, accredited healthcare organization that provides a continuum of neurorehabilitation services to adults and children who have experienced brain injuries, spinal cord injuries and multiple trauma. They offer a full continuum of care that includes subacute, outpatient, residential, supported living, and home & community services at more than 30 locations throughout Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Midland and Saginaw counties in Michigan.

A pioneer in the brain injury field, STRS began more than 35 years ago on an attractive, suburban campus in Romulus, Mich., and is recognized as one of the earliest independent rehabilitation providers in the country. Their whole person approach to rehabilitation encompasses one's body, mind, heart, and spirit. They refer to it as the Science of Caring®, and it is at the center of everything STRS does.

In late 2014, the leadership team at Special Tree noted a 12 percent increase in year-over-year non-labor spend, despite working with a group purchasing partner. During the same timeframe, their revenue growth was less than 4 percent. Among the specific areas of concern for STPS were:

- 14 percent increase in medical-surgical supplies.
- 18 percent increase in office supplies.
- 6 percent increase in food services.
- 11 percent increase in environmental supplies.

Beyond the cost increases, STRS leadership realized other areas where they could be negatively affected by this trend. “We risked a negative impact on clinical care staffing level and an unwanted, cascading impact on staff satisfaction and patient care delivery,” said Animesh Anand, chief administrative officer, STRS.

Adamant about uncompromising patient care and about maintaining high patient satisfaction, Special Tree’s Leadership Council decided on a strategy to improve supply chain capabilities, starting with re-evaluating its group purchasing and supplier relationship. Specific project success markers were identified including reduction of non-labor spend by 10 percent by the end of calendar year 2015 and the improvement of staff satisfaction as well as other structural measures such as nurse/patient ratio, caregiver/patient ratio, physician hours/patient ratio and respiratory therapist/patient ratio.
Success Story Supply Chain Solutions

THE SOLUTION
Among the first and most impactful decisions the STRS Leadership Council took to support their initiatives was the strategic decision to strengthen their relationship with Intalere by signing a sole-source provider agreement. This allowed them to reap the full value of their group purchasing relationship, including the engagement of their account manager Michael Roseberry. “Michael Roseberry from Intalere was critical to the success of this project,” said Anand. “He was, perhaps, the best resource for Special Tree.” With his assistance and facilitation, STRS found an excellent medical-surgical supplier/distributor who understood the needs of patients while providing STRS with outstanding service. The supplier also provided us with an inventory control software solution as a value-added service. The comprehensive inventory control, purchasing management and ancillary tracking software solution was integrated into the facility’s EHR, bringing previously unavailable efficiencies to their supply chain function.

THE OUTCOME
STRS achieved reductions in non-labor spend by the end of 2015 including:

- 34.8 percent reduction in medical-surgical supplies.
- 45 percent reduction in office supplies and printer supplies.
- 10.4 percent reduction in nutrition/food services.
- 31 percent reduction in environmental supply.

Beyond the savings, the initiative also got the STRS team thinking much more strategically about the supply chain function. “In this project, the Special Tree implementation team created simple, yet innovative solutions to enable the end users to have easy access to supplies,” said Anand. “For example, the team bought inexpensive bins with sections to organize the supplies in patient rooms to improve access to the supplies. We modified our central supply staffing schedule to be on campus 24/7/365, and established a manned hotline for any clinical staff to call central supply if they needed a particular supply.”

Moreover, staff satisfaction improved in 2015 against benchmarks by more than 10 percent. The Detroit Free Press named Special Tree among the Top 100 large employers in Michigan in 2015 for the 6th year in a row.

Anand and the STRS team were also thrilled at the level of engagement and collaboration that brought significant success in a relatively short period of time and look forward to the continued benefits the partnership can bring.

“The results attained are directly attributed to collaborative efforts between Special Tree, Intalere, supplier/distributor and inventory control software system provider.”

Animesh Anand · Chief Administrative Officer · Special Tree Rehabilitation System