

## *The Value of Health Systems During the COVID-19 Pandemic* **OhioHealth – Columbus, Ohio**

### **Responding to the Pandemic: Testing, Supply Chain and Staff Support**

Early in the pandemic, COVID-19 tests were shipped out of state, which led to delays in patients receiving their results. In late March 2020, **the OhioHealth Laboratory Services team developed the capability to run COVID-19 tests from around the system in our labs. A year later, over 500,000 tests have been analyzed by our lab team.** OhioHealth Laboratory Services is able to read up to 2,200 tests per day, with PCR test results now available to the patient in six hours. Rapid test results, used in urgent cares and free-standing emergency departments, take under an hour.

**OhioHealth had a dedicated supply chain team focused solely on personal protective equipment procurement for the entire system** that ensured our front-line workers were never asked to work without proper PPE, even during the early days of the pandemic when the international supply chain was disrupted. This included accepting community donations and partnering with the nonprofit Battelle. OhioHealth was one of the first systems nationwide to engage with Battelle’s “Critical Care Decontamination System” to safely sterilize N95 masks so they could be reused as needed. Find more information [here](#).

**Operating at “scale” allows resources to be redistributed in rapid time to meet critical needs. During the COVID-19 public health emergency, OhioHealth redeployed 20% of the administrative staff up to the front lines in roles such as unit clerks and vaccination processing teams.** When non-emergent surgeries were paused, those staff members were also redeployed to other areas. Read a redeployed associate’s story [here](#). We did not have layoffs or pay cuts due to the pandemic. In fact, our associates received “pandemic” bonuses as a “thank you” for their commitment. We are proud that we are able to care for those who care for our community. Being part of a system and having cash on hand made potential challenges, like layoffs, avoidable, even when we lost revenue over the past year from unexpected challenges, such as the statewide postponement of non-emergent surgeries.

Systems create the ability to support the community in clinically significant numbers. We have the capacity to vaccinate 5,000 people per day as a system – this number simply would not happen if we were operating as individual hospitals. Learn more about how we keep our vaccine clinics running smoothly – such as pharmacists pre-filling syringes and efficient registration – [here](#).

### **Prioritizing Community Health**

**The communities we serve (in 47 of Ohio’s 88 counties) benefit from OhioHealth’s mission to improve health and wellness.** One of the most tangible measures of OhioHealth’s value to communities is the amount of “community benefit” we provide annually. OhioHealth is proud to reinvest in the community to improve the quality of care for patients and their families.

**In fiscal year 2020, OhioHealth provided \$479.1 million in community benefit, including \$122 million in charity care for people who lack insurance or the means to pay for care, and more than \$284.5 million in Medicaid costs not reimbursed by the state or federal government.** The total exceeds our fiscal year 2019 support by nearly \$30 million. Over 27,000 hours of service were completed by our associates, and over 220 associate leaders serve on boards and commissions in their communities.

**OhioHealth worked with other health systems in the area, as well as an individual system, on a variety of initiatives during the pandemic to serve the community and our partners, including:**

- OhioHealth partnered with the community to collect needed PPE and medical supplies to help prevent shortages for medical professionals treating COVID-19 patients. More than 1.1 million items were donated, with nearly 90% of the items used to protect front-line workers. When we no longer had a need for donated PPE, we provided those supplies to community partners, donating 100,000 items to nonprofit agencies throughout our footprint, who then distributed them to people in need.
- OhioHealth worked with the YMCA and Dedicated Senior Medical Centers to distribute more than 4,000 OhioHealth COVID-19 care packages, including hand sanitizer, masks and gloves to families and seniors in need. See local media coverage of this give-back event [here](#).
- OhioHealth partnered with Columbus Public Health and two other adult health systems in central Ohio to bring free, drive-through COVID-19 testing to underserved communities. Learn more [here](#).
- OhioHealth partnered with the Community Shelter Board, as well as city and county health departments, other local hospital systems and addiction medicine partners, to provide screening and care for patients experiencing homelessness, as well as training for their staff members.
  - We noticed patients experiencing homelessness were staying at the hospital after being tested because they couldn't return to a shelter until their COVID-19 tests were known. OhioHealth worked with the Community Shelter Board to procure two hotels to serve as a shelter location for those who needed to quarantine while awaiting test results.
  - OhioHealth also provided area shelters and YMCAs with needed supplies, like thermometers and access to N95 mask sterilization through our partnership with Battelle.
  - One of our physicians and her team helped staff at shelters with education around proper PPE use and other infectious control protocols.
- OhioHealth partnered with United Way of Central Ohio to support the United for Kids Summer Drive. Our associate volunteers helped package and deliver 1,500 kits to help kids stay active, learn and be happy.
- As businesses and organizations began to reopen, we wanted to continue our efforts to help keep the community safe. OhioHealth reached out to our nonprofit partners, chambers of commerce and local schools to offer complimentary

OhioHealth Safety Signage Kits. The kits reflected Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for social distancing, mask wearing and hand washing. Kits included floor, seat and mirror clings and clings about donning/doffing PPE, all offered in a variety of sizes to fit each organization's needs.

- OhioHealth partnered with the Columbus Urban League for a pop-up clinic, where 240 people in a traditionally underserved neighborhood were vaccinated. A trusted health care provider partnering with a trusted community partner led to this event filling up quickly.
- We know our state is home to many non-English-speaking people. In order to make sure that they had the opportunity to learn about the COVID-19 vaccine and get scheduled, we had our website translated into the five most common languages spoken in our communities.
- Systemness provides a single point of contact for government, which allows for more efficient communication and networking. We've partnered with the state and local community governments to provide physician expertise behind the scenes and at press conferences. Our physicians have also been spotlighted in statewide commercials encouraging COVID-19 mitigation strategies and encouraging vaccination.

### **Increasing Operational Efficiencies**

**Streamlining our COVID-19 work as a system was top priority.** A system incident command center was established for COVID-19, which was able through online WebEx video calls to interact daily with incident command centers at each hospital. During daily briefings, each hospital heard system updates and shared with the group their obstacles and successes, support and guidance. There was also an incident command phone number and email address available for hospital incident commanders to call with questions, ideas or feedback.

### **Maintaining and Expand Access**

**Due to being a large system of over 35,000 physicians, associates and volunteers, we have the staffing and system support to provide easy access to COVID-19 testing and vaccinations in the communities we serve.** Our goal is to make services convenient to where patients live and work, and OhioHealth was able to expand access for testing to the communities we serve in central Ohio and in the region. OhioHealth currently has vaccination sites at 13 different clinics to reach patients in all areas of our footprint.

### **Fueling Innovation**

**Being a system allows us to use our IT platform to reach a much larger number of patients. We used MyChart to contact patients for vaccination awareness (through push alerts) and scheduling.** Patients who were not comfortable scheduling online were able to call a staffed phone bank to schedule appointments.

### **Improving Quality of Care**

**Being part of a system creates the opportunity to standardize processes, management structures and tools/equipment, which is something that OhioHealth**

**takes advantage of during and beyond a pandemic.** COVID-19 has also helped health care evolve, reminding us we need to be flexible and nimble in how we provide patient care going forward, as well as continuing to care for our associates and their resiliency. Because of this, we've named a medical director of associate and provider well-being to keep this work top of mind and make sure our associates and providers have the resiliency resources they need.