

SUCCESS STORY

# Doctors and hospital leadership recognize elevated patient safety and physician satisfaction with PerfectServe



**Health System:**  
Spectrum Health System

**Location:** West Michigan

*“Today, we all have instant communication with our friends and family, and to think we are not doing that in times of patient need just isn’t logical.”*

Dr. Matthew Denenberg  
VPMA, Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital

When the executive team of West Michigan’s Spectrum Health System — a 12-hospital network of more than 3,000 physicians and 30,000 employees — made the decision to implement PerfectServe’s secure care team collaboration system, Dr. Matthew Denenberg, who serves as Vice President of Medical Affairs (VPMA) of the system’s Helen DeVos Children’s hospital, said it was for all the right reasons.

It wasn’t about being “cutting edge” or increasing the hospitals’ competitive share of the marketplace. The decision came from a shared understanding that it was time to move toward a direct and digital method of communication for the hospital network’s physicians because the old way simply wasn’t working anymore.

“It was unsafe,” Dr. Denenberg said. “And it wasn’t cost effective.”

## Dealing with archaic communication processes

In addition to his role as VPMA, Dr. Denenberg also serves as an ER physician. That puts him in the unique position of understanding firsthand the angst of hospital staff when facing archaic processes in times of real emergency.

Like many systems of its size, prior to implementing PerfectServe, Spectrum maintained paper schedules for all of its physicians. Contact information regarding who to call for any given reason resided either in a book or binder on someone’s desk, or within an unautomated and unintegrated copy-and-paste calendar application. If schedule changes needed to be made on the fly, instant updates were not an option. This resulted in wasted time and effort

More than 50% of attempts to communicate with physicians took longer than 10 minutes to complete.

*Spectrum Health Nursing  
Time Study, 2016*

*“After our early-adopters came on board, they liked PerfectServe so much they wanted all of our physicians using the app as quickly as possible.”*

Dr. Matthew Denenberg  
VPMA, Helen DeVos Children's Hospital

on the part of hospital staff responsible for patient care, which suffered due to communication delays.

“We started seeing a rise in the number of event reports of delayed communications with physicians during time of patient need,” said Denenberg.

It became apparent that the paper-based system was no longer appropriate in today's era of direct and digital communications.

## Implementation and adoption of a secure care team collaboration solution

The initial implementation of PerfectServe Synchrony™ took three months to complete. By that time, nearly 50% of the Spectrum Health System's 3,000 physicians were using PerfectServe regularly.

Dr. Denenberg was charged with helping hospital leadership ensure physician adoption and became the project champion on an end-user level. He was able to walk away from the implementation and adoption stage with some powerful insights.

For instance, to encourage early adoption by a larger number of physicians, Denenberg says hospitals should put serious thought and consideration into educating and training their staff on both PerfectServe's browser-based and mobile app interfaces.

“The transition to the use of a mobile app was very easy for me,” Denenberg said. “It was not unlike the communication technology I use in my personal time. But we could have done a better job of providing more robust orientation and education and at-the-elbow support for our physicians who may not be used to mobile communication applications.”

Hospitals should also take measures to ensure that their technology infrastructure is sound. Making sure the Wi-Fi signals in isolated places — like inside the radiology suite or the campuses of rural hospitals — can support the technology will prevent gaps in communication workflows and encourage user adoption.

Lastly, Denenberg suggests that hospital leaders spend quality time with different physician groups to understand their unique workflows and needs. For example, while PerfectServe's HIPAA-compliant security measures

*“There’s no question in my mind that being able to have direct communication between providers and staff with PerfectServe is just the safest thing for patients.”*

Dr. Matthew Denenberg  
VPMA, Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital

With PerfectServe now in place, 74% of Spectrum’s physician contact attempts are completed in 10 minutes or less.

*Spectrum Health Nursing  
Time Study, 2016*

prevent anyone other than the physician from accessing his or her messages on the app, one cardiologist had a standard practice of having his nurse read his messages aloud to him in the operating room while his hands were otherwise preoccupied — usually inside a patient’s chest.

“We obviously did not consider that particular situation up front,” Denenberg said. “But what I particularly like about PerfectServe is that the service team is very attentive to things like this. They helped us find a workaround for this and for all of the minor hiccups we ran into. And now the biggest complaint we hear — and there are always complaints and hiccups when you’re implementing a new technology across thousands of physicians sending tens of thousands of messages each week — is that all of the system’s staff aren’t using the service yet.”

## Instant communications and improved patient outcomes

Now that Spectrum Health physicians are initiating up to 60,000 interactions a month through PerfectServe Synchrony, the benefits have become evident.

“It’s instantaneous contact with providers. We have eliminated the middleman,” Denenberg says. “Our physicians who are using this on an everyday basis absolutely love the ease of back and forth communication with their colleagues.”

And with ease of communication comes high levels of staff satisfaction. Physician and staff satisfaction is of particular importance to hospital leadership. Arming nurses and doctors with the ability to provide patient care when the patient needs it most, from wherever the physician may be at the time, is one way to make sure everyone involved is more satisfied with their work.

As an added bonus, using PerfectServe Synchrony has decreased the number of parties needed to maintain the hospitals’ complex physician schedules, which has led to a decrease in operational costs.

Because PerfectServe has standardized the way Spectrum physicians communicate with providers and leadership, patient outcomes — in particular patient safety — have improved, as well.

“I can tell right now who is on-call for each specialty and reach them instantaneously,” Denenberg says. “That kind of efficiency and standardization has made our patient care safer and better.”

For Spectrum Health System, PerfectServe Synchrony has decreased response times on average from 12 to 4 minutes, improved physician satisfaction and increased levels of patient care and safety.

*Spectrum Health Nursing Time Study, 2016*

## A final word of advice from the doctor

For Spectrum Health System, PerfectServe Synchrony has decreased response times on average from 12 minutes to 4 minutes, eliminated confusion and inconsistency with maintaining call schedules, improved physician satisfaction and increased levels of patient care and safety.

“The one thing I would say to the leadership of a hospital that’s not using PerfectServe, or a similar clinical communication system,” Denenberg says, “is ‘Why aren’t you?’ It provides standard workflows across a hospital system for instant communication that significantly increases patient safety by decreasing long delays in communicating with physicians.”

And if you’re still not convinced, Dr. Denenberg has one last piece of advice: “Make a site visit to a place that is effectively using PerfectServe and talk to the staff. You’ll get a better idea of how beneficial it really is.”