

# CASE STUDY

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS DRIVE INPATIENT AND OUTPATIENT PHARMACY PERFORMANCE



**Todd Fowler**

Executive Vice President and  
Chief Operating Officer  
~ Holzer Health System

### A DECADES-LONG PARTNERSHIP

Holzer Health System traces its roots back more than a century to when Dr. Charles E. Holzer Sr. opened the first private hospital in southeastern Ohio. Located in Gallipolis, that small, seven-bed hospital has grown into the multi-facility healthcare system it is today. This includes a medical center and care center in Gallipolis, a medical center in Jackson, and numerous walk-in clinics, retail pharmacies, wellness centers, and post-acute care services, among other resources, across the region.

Holzer has remained true to the philosophy set forth by their founder – “The Patient is at the Center of All We Do.” It is this outlook that led Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Holzer, Todd Fowler, to continue building on the foundation of their fruitful partnership with CPS for inpatient and specialty pharmacy management services. Over the 20+ year relationship, CPS has consistently driven value for Holzer through initiatives supporting clinical performance, cost savings, and operational expertise.

### A RELATIONSHIP THAT CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

The partnership between Holzer and CPS, one of the country's largest pharmacy and hospital services providers, reaches back to 1998 when CPS began helping the health system manage its inpatient pharmacy operations. As the system has grown, CPS has continued to deliver incremental value to Holzer's leadership and staff. Based on these successes, when Holzer chose to streamline their three retail pharmacies in Gallipolis, Jackson, and Athens in 2014, they turned again to CPS as a partner.

Everything CPS brings to Holzer is focused on growing the impact of their partnership while providing ongoing positive financial and quality outcomes for the health system. One way the company drives value on a continual basis is through its Comprehensive Pharmacy Assessment (CPA), a proprietary tool that audits over 450 points of a pharmacy's operational health. During the company's most recent analysis, they found Holzer had successfully improved compliance metrics, decreased regulatory risk, and increased alignment with ISMP best practices. Through the CPA, CPS helps the health system maintain visibility to the performance of its pharmacy in accordance with current

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recommended best practice. CPS supported the implementation of a conversion program that replaces FDA-approved biologics with biosimilars expected to yield over \$386,000 in savings annually. Through additional CPS supported operational and clinical initiatives Holzer realized a net financial impact of over \$10 million in their last fiscal year.

The health system continues to get positive feedback from both internal and external stakeholders. In 2021, pharmacy staff scored 4.21 out of 5 in the Annual Nurse Survey. CPS provides staff with continuing education and competency courses to help Holzer pharmacists and technicians build on their knowledge. In 2021, the company delivered more than 180 courses and continuing education credits.

The effectiveness of the partnership has also helped Holzer strengthen its position as a resource in the local community and raise its visibility among other health systems in the region, notes Fowler. “When staff from a large regional cancer center were onsite doing an assessment of our cancer services as we work toward an affiliation, they were very complimentary of our pharmacy — even calling our pharmacist a rock star,” he says. “That speaks volumes not only to what Holzer does but also the value CPS adds in helping us deliver excellent patient care to a county of 30,000 people.”

Part of that has to do with CPS' approach that leverages its collaborative network of pharmacy professionals. “We have a CPS pharmacy director who oversees all Holzer's pharmacy services,” Fowler says. The pharmacy director visits each site weekly and focuses on creating a supportive and cooperative atmosphere. “So even though we have different types of operations, we're not siloed — we're one team.”

“I'm proud that the collaborative efforts between CPS and Holzer result in better care for my community and neighbors which I believe is something we all can count as success,” reflects, CPS Pharmacy Director, Neil Creasey.

## HOLZER'S PATH TO SPECIALTY PHARMACY

The idea for establishing a specialty pharmacy came about like many of Holzer's pharmacy decisions — following a conversation with CPS. “Several of our cancer center patients need infusion therapies,” explains Fowler. “We had limited access to some medications, and those we did have access to were cost prohibitive.” As a result, patients often had to travel up to two hours away for therapies that might need to be administered a few times a week. Fowler asked their onsite system director of pharmacy services from CPS whether they would have better and more affordable access to these types of medications if Holzer had a specialty pharmacy. The answer was yes. “I learned we'd be able to get what we needed at a pay structure that fit into our budget,” he says. “I knew then it was something I wanted to explore so we could continue expanding our ability to provide care to our patients.”

Fowler says he knew CPS could help make it happen. That's because theirs has evolved into far more than a vendor-customer relationship. “We've come to consider CPS a strategic partner — and I saw establishing a specialty pharmacy as a strategic step,” he explains.

<sup>1</sup> Cost savings are calculated by CPS analysts and pharmacy purchasing best practices that compare CPS spend against benchmarks based on assumptions of what pharmacy spend would be without the strategic partnership in place.

# CASE STUDY

**DISTRIBUTED**  
MORE THAN  
**300**  
**PRESCRIPTIONS**

**CONTRIBUTED**  
**\$1**  
**MILLION**  
**In NEW Revenue**

Holzer Specialty Pharmacy opened its doors in February of 2022 – and although still in the early stages, progress has been encouraging. In its first six months, the specialty pharmacy dispensed more than 300 prescriptions and contributed \$1 million in new revenue.

"I'm impressed by the number of prescriptions we've dispensed, but also the volume of calls being handled," says Fowler. One of the things that stands out for him is how involved the specialty pharmacy team is with patients. That's critical as many of the medications require a lot of education and support to ensure proper use. More than that, CPS tracks incoming calls in very much the same way as Holzer's centralized scheduling center, a system that has been nationally recognized. "Like us, they pay close attention to wait times and abandoned call rates – and their statistics are very good." Calls are answered on average within 8.5 seconds and abandoned calls are less than 1%.

Another area where CPS and Holzer are aligned is in their hiring practices. "When they brought on someone to manage our specialty pharmacy operation, they made sure it was someone local – a person who already knows the culture and community of rural southern Ohio. That's important," says Fowler. As a result, he adds, the relationships pharmacy and hospital staff have with CPS managers are so seamless – many don't even realize they are not Holzer employees. "That says something about how much a part of our team CPS is."

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2023 AND BEYOND

Launching the specialty pharmacy and completing accreditations would have taken significantly longer without the efficiency CPS' range of expertise brings. The same is true for the collaborative practice agreements they've been able to establish for ambulatory care, compliance reviews, and auditing for retail locations. That's why Holzer plans to build on their relationship with the company and explore new opportunities to help them fulfill their longer-term strategy – to focus on quality and patient outcomes. "We have a relatively large outpatient physician practice covering five counties and 15 sites – and we want to optimize how we use our pharmacy services in the clinical settings," says Fowler. That's why for 2023 and beyond, they are looking at the possibility of implementing new solutions such as telepharmacy and medication therapy management. They're also looking for ways to augment their oncology services with tactics like expanding biosimilar integration and optimize outpatient infusion revenue.

"The strategy and direction of pharmaceutical services are so specialized," says Fowler. "If you want to maximize opportunities in the pharmacy – it's critical to have a true strategic partner on your side, and CPS has proven to me over and over again that they are that partner," says Fowler. "They know what's happening in the industry and bring ideas to us that meet our strategic vision. Then together, we decide what makes the most sense for Holzer."



# Partnerships to Drive Pharmacy Performance Excellence



CPS partners with healthcare leaders to improve inpatient and outpatient pharmacy capabilities and drive financial, operational, and clinical performance.

## We empower healthcare organizations to advance their standard of care through collaboration:

- Implementing best practices and proprietary technologies to drive value and enhance the patient experience
- Leveraging a deep bench of subject-matter experts
- Continually improving the way healthcare is delivered
- Driving performance to reduce costs, increase revenues, and elevate the status of internal leaders and teams

Let's discuss opportunities to improve the financial and clinical performance of your pharmacy.



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