

**Case Study: Safer Chemicals Challenge: Green Cleaning Goal****Summary**

Spectrum Health identified that many of the cleaning products used were harmful to patients, employees and the environment. In 2006, Butterworth and Blodgett evaluated existing chemicals used and transitioned to environmentally preferred cleaners. The outcome was a healthier work environment for staff, a healthier recovery environment for patients and reduced overall cleaning costs.

# Spectrum Health, Grand Rapids, Michigan

**The Problem**

Within the hospital setting, some products that are used contain harmful chemicals linked to cancer, birth defects, asthma and a variety of other health problems. The Healthier Hospitals Initiative is working with hospitals to eliminate the use of these harmful chemicals and switch to safer alternatives in order to improve the health of patients, staff and local communities.

**The Strategy Selected**

The initial roll out in 2006 included an evaluation of existing products and alternative green seal products. Since implementation, a system green cleaning policy has been developed to spread and hardwire this behavior throughout the Spectrum Health System.

**Implementation Process****Phase I: Transition to Environmentally Preferred Cleaners**

- Review product inventory purchased with vendor.
- Evaluate product redundancies with vendor and environmental services.
- Determine Green Seal certified product alternatives and pilot products at Blodgett Hospital.
- Develop standard cleaning products and eliminate the purchase of redundant products resulting in a reduction of inventory, increase in product consistency and elimination of redundancy.
- Transition to environmentally preferable and Green Seal certified products at Butterworth and Blodgett Hospital after a successful pilot at Blodgett.
- Supply chain transitioned items available for order to standard green cleaning products.

**Phase II: Educating Frontline Staff**

- Educate cleaning staff on zero-tolerance policy on purchasing cleaning products at local stores and requesting reimbursement. All products must be approved and provided by supply chain.
- Education for cleaning staff on new cleaning process, products and environmental and health impacts.

Helen DeVos Children's Hospital  
Grand Rapids, Michigan



## About Spectrum Health

Spectrum Health is a not-for-profit health system, based in West Michigan, offering a full continuum of care through the Spectrum Health Hospital Group, which is comprised of 11 hospitals; 1,150 employed physicians and advanced practice providers including members of the Spectrum Health Medical Group; and Priority Health, a 590,000-member health plan. Spectrum Health is West Michigan's largest employer with 21,500 employees. In 2014, Spectrum Health was named one of the nation's 15 Top Health Systems® by Truven Health Analytics.

### Phase III: Eliminate Aerosols

- Communication about why eliminating aerosols and air fresheners.
- Elimination availability to purchase aerosols and air fresheners through supply chain.
- Develop policy prohibiting the use of aerosols and air fresheners.

### Phase IV: Preventative Measures

- Use of floor mats at high-traffic entry ways to reduce dirt and to protect the floors.
- Cleaning procedure changed to microfiber mops, cloths and orbital floor scrubbers.
- Reduced the overall square footage of carpet in the hospitals and replaced it with no-wax, low-maintenance flooring, reducing labor costs and the need for harsh chemicals.

### Phase V: Spread to Regional Facilities

- Audit existing cleaning program for regional hospitals including pulling purchasing data and evaluating stock room.
- Reduce inventory of existing products and reduce redundant products.
- Transition products utilized to standard green cleaning products and processes.

## The Team

**Ginger Boogerd**, Environmental Services Operations Manager

**Bill Julien**, Environmental Services Operations Manager

**Branden Michael**, Environmental Services Operations Manager

**Josh Miller**, Sustainability Coordinator

**Sarah Chartier**, Sustainability Coordinator

## Benefits

- \$30,000 savings through a reduction in product inventory and standardization.
- 94 percent of glass cleaner is Green Seal Certified.
- 65 percent of general purpose cleaners are Green Seal Certified.
- The carpet cleaner budget is less than 0.2 percent of total spends on cleaning supplies.
- Traditional cleaning products are harmful to both the environment and human health when prolonged exposure occurs.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

Program success was dependent on vendor partnerships, development of standards and measuring sustainability. By standardizing the items for purchase, we increased control of what products were purchased. Monitoring and auditing a program once in place helped to sustain the efforts. Without monitoring, individual departments may purchase non-compliant products. Monitoring is conducted by environmental services leadership through walk throughs and annual data evaluation of purchases made by the sustainability office.