

## Eco-Friendly Strategies Plant Seeds for Long-Term Savings Among Hospitals

By David Sheon | June 25, 2013

In the past couple of years, 149 hospitals saved **\$55 million** as a result of developing and implementing environmentally friendly initiatives. So why are more and more health providers going green and what's behind this rising trend?

"Increasingly health care leaders are recognizing the critical role environmental stewardship plays in quality health care," said Janet Brown, Director of Facility Engagement, PracticeGreenhealth. "Going Green is moving beyond the blue bin by the photo copier and in alignment with other strategic priorities – prevention, wellness, mission, staff engagement, community benefit, fiscal responsibility and the right thing to do."

Hospitals are going green in many ways, from turning to sustainable energy to finding synergies in hospital transportation services. Dell's Children's Medical Center of Central Texas and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, MA, illustrate how being environmentally friendly translates to significant cost savings. Both hospitals, in fact, earned platinum certification from LEED (leadership in energy and environmental design), the most widely recognized and widely used green building program in the world.

- Dell's Children's Hospital saved **\$6.8 million** as a result of a successful collaboration with Austin Energy that eliminated the need to build a central plant (source of energy typically used to power multiple buildings). Using a combined heat and power (CHP) system instead, Dell Children's became one of the first hospitals in Texas to leverage an onsite energy system as its primary source of electricity and one of the first grid-independent hospitals in the U.S.
- Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center reduced its annual lab energy consumption by **\$270,000**, while lessening its carbon footprint and maintaining a commitment to safety in lab and research facilities as a top

priority. In addition to reducing its annual lab energy by recycling lab materials, the medical center also combined its transportation service with other hospitals, began using reusable plastic mugs, and sent their leftover food to the compost.

Health systems participating in the Healthier Hospital Initiative – a national campaign to improve environmental health and sustainability in health care through innovative approaches – also report strong fiscal returns:

- The Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) saved **\$21.7 million** by diverting 364 tons of waste through reprocessing single use devices in their hospitals.
- Kaiser Permanente saved **\$4 million** in annual energy costs after its initial purchase of environmentally responsible computers for all of their facilities.

Going green benefits stakeholders in health care and beyond. When hospitals reduce expenses through environmentally smart investments, they improve their overall long-term performance and encourage the community to make eco-conscious choices too. When hospitals save costs patients also benefit because the money can be put toward health practitioners or other needs to improve care.

“There are numerous win-win opportunities for cost saving environmental improvement strategies in the health care sector,” Brown said. “As health care leaders become increasingly engaged, environmental stewardship programming is further integrated into the day to day operations of the vibrant health care environment and its benefits are maximized.”

Are hospitals in your local community adopting environmentally friendly initiatives? What could they be doing to conserve energy, reduce waste or go green in some other way?

**To read this post on RWHC Blog, [click here](#).**