

Groundbreaking Report Spotlights Benefits of Going Green for Hospitals

By Paul DeMiglio | September 12, 2013

The Healthier Hospitals Initiative (HHI), a program that encourages hospitals to go healthier for patients by going greener, is marking its one-year anniversary by releasing the first-ever report (2012 Milestone Report) that quantifies the success of sustainability initiatives among hospitals in the U.S. and Canada.

HHI is made up of 13 sponsoring health systems and three nonprofit organizations including Health Care Without Harm, The Center for Health Design and Practice Greenhealth. As we reported in June, many hospitals are exploring ways to lower costs through environmentally friendly options and sustainable energy strategies.

“The HHI Milestone report shows that hospitals are increasingly embedding sustainability into their core operating system,” said Gary Cohen, President of Health Care Without Harm and Founder of HHI. “HHI also offers hospitals a powerful way to meet the Triple Aim of improving the patient experience, addressing population health and lower their costs.”



The report demonstrates how the green efforts of 370 hospitals are translating to substantial cost-savings and a reduction in waste. In addition to recycling more than 50 million pounds of materials and saving approximately \$32 million from single-use medical device reprocessing, the report also found that participating hospitals are:

- Preventing 61 million pounds of waste from going to landfills (among 44 member hospitals).

- Creating more healthful meals for their patients by limiting overall meat intake, decreasing the amount of meat served by 10 percent from 2010-12.
- Increasing the overall amount of money spent on healthful beverages from 10 percent to 62 percent.
- One hospital reported purchasing more environmentally friendly cleaning supplies, spending on average more than 37.75 percent of their cleaning supply budgets on green cleaning products.

“At Practice Greenhealth, our strength comes from the collective expertise and knowledge that members bring to the table about what works to make our health care more sustainable,” said Laura Wenger, RN, Executive Director of Practice Greenhealth. “HHI’s 2012 Milestone Report is proof that hospitals of all sizes benefit from this wisdom.”

The [Commonwealth Fund 2012 report](#) found that if health care organizations, such as hospitals, adopted sustainable practices, industry savings could add up to an estimated \$5.4 billion in 5 years and more than \$15 billion over 10 years. The study also concludes that health systems that embrace green initiatives are examples for the health care system as a whole to follow.

“As part of a preventive approach to controlling chronic disease, increasing numbers of hospitals have committed to minimizing adverse environmental impact of their operations on patients, staff, and the community, serving as role models for the health sector and society at large,” the study authors noted.

Are health systems in your community embracing green initiatives? What do you see as the major barriers to more hospitals going green and what incentives could be created to overcome these challenges?

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