CHG Healthcare



CASE STUDY:

From gap to growth: Launching neurology services in rural Illinois

Background

Horizon Health is located in Paris, Illinois, a small rural city of about 8,000 people. Like many rural U.S. communities, Paris has an aging population, facing age-related neurological conditions such as stroke, dementia, and Parkinson's disease. Because Horizon Health wasn't equipped to fully support neurology services locally, patients often had to travel up to three hours for care or go without treatment altogether.

The challenge

Horizon Health identified a significant unmet need for neurology services but faced the common rural healthcare obstacle of recruiting a full-time neurologist—a process that can take years.

In the meantime, patient demand continued to grow, resulting in a backlog of cases and delayed care. Horizon Health's leadership needed a solution that could:

- Address immediate patient access issues
- Remain financially viable
- Support long-term program development

The solution

Rather than further delay care, Horizon partnered with CHG Healthcare's Weatherby Healthcare division to implement a locum tenens coverage strategy.

Working collaboratively, Weatherby and Horizon leadership evaluated both the clinical need and financial feasibility of launching neurology services. Together, they developed a phased approach to quickly and responsibly stand up the program.

A locum neurologist, Dr. Alireza Shirazian, was placed on-site to begin seeing patients and reduce the backlog. In addition to providing direct care, Dr. Shirazian helped establish clinical workflows and build internal referral pathways, laying the operational foundation for the service line.

> "We partnered with Weatherby to find an excellent locum physician. Dr. Shirazian did an amazing job, and we were sad to see him go. We recently had another unexpected need arise with urology, and Weatherby was my first call.
>
> -Lisa Cook,
> Director of physician and provider relations at Horizon Health

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The results

The benefits of the neurology program for the community were immediate and meaningful:

- Patients gained access to care locally, eliminating the need for long-distance travel.
- Geriatric and memory care patients benefited from in-person care, which can be more effective than telehealth visits alone.
- The patient backlog was reduced, improving the timeliness of care.
- Internal workflows and referral systems were successfully established.

As demand grew, Horizon expanded its teleneurology capabilities and began exploring adding a neurologist to its staff to sustain long-term growth.

What began as a targeted solution has also evolved into a broader strategic partnership. Horizon has since applied the same model to launch additional specialty services, including urology.

Horizon Health's experience demonstrates how locum tenens can serve as more than a temporary fix. By aligning clinical needs with financial and operational planning, the organization used a flexible staffing model to expand services, improve patient access, and strengthen long-term sustainability.

Strategic account management

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- Enhance operational efficiency
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