



EXCELLENCE IN EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Adapt. Evolve. Excel.

Responding to a rapidly shifting healthcare landscape.

2024 Annual Report



The True Power of Adaptability

Rob Thomas, President & CEO

As I reflect on my time as president and CEO of Emergency Physicians Professional Association (EPPA), I'm struck by the transformative journey we've undertaken together. When I took this role in September 2013, I recognized the immense potential within our organization, alongside a need for meaningful change.

At that time, EPPA was serving a stable but relatively static set of hospitals. By embracing a forward-thinking mindset and adapting to a rapidly shifting healthcare landscape, we've grown our teams, expanded into new health systems and hospitals, and implemented innovative care models that have strengthened our impact across Minnesota.

Every day our physician leaders provide service-oriented direction to our organization. It's incredible to see how everyone plays a role in delivering top-quality care to those who need it—from our scheduling and administrative teams to our clinical leaders, partners, and advanced practice clinicians (APCs).

Our growth and success wouldn't have been possible without strong partnerships. We've expanded into more regional sites, stepping into roles where our expertise in emergency medicine was desperately needed. We've filled staffing gaps in struggling emergency departments and become trusted leaders, taking on the roles of educators and operational consultants.

These partnerships showcase our dedication not just to patients but also to the healthcare systems that rely on us.

The healthcare environment today is vastly different from a decade ago. Overcrowding in emergency departments, boarding issues, and increasing demands have required us to rethink how care is delivered. And we've risen to the challenges.

At its core, EPPA remains a safety net for the communities we serve. We've stayed true to our mission of delivering excellent patient care by embracing constant adaptation, which has fostered resilience and optimism within our team.

As we look to the future, I'm confident we'll continue to adapt and thrive. It's been an honor to lead EPPA for the past decade, and I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together in the years ahead.

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Patient Testimonial

“Every staff member on duty in the ED was exceptional. They were absolutely fantastic while attending to my ailing mother.”

1

Agile Care & Adaptable Solutions

Every company that lasts encounters times when its strength and commitment are tested. How it weathers those tests—and whether it emerges stronger—is what defines the true resilience of the best companies and their leaders.

In the last decade, EPPA has undergone extraordinary growth, survived a global pandemic, and transformed its approach to care.



The Zone model matures

Several years ago, a Zone leadership model was created around each health system partner. This allows for more decision making to be done as close to the clinical work as possible. The change has improved engagement and ownership. At the same time, EPPA can leverage the size of our organization for purchasing power and access to resources that smaller groups don't have.



Focused on patient-centered care

EPPA is laser-focused on ensuring patient safety and managing risk. In an increasingly challenging clinical environment with more fragmentation of care encounters, EPPA is actively working on ways to decrease patient risks using clinical data and documentation to better standardize care using evidence-based measures.



Advocacy for emergency medicine

Delivering the best care possible requires advocacy at both state and federal levels. Several EPPA team members are involved on initiatives around workplace safety and professional liability reform. Dr. Thomas is working with the Minnesota chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) to help emergency physicians effectively advocate for clinician and patient safety outcomes.



Forward momentum

The Urgency Room opened its first location in 2010 and added two more within a few years. This year work began on the fourth Urgency Room, which will open in Golden Valley in September 2025. Patients clearly appreciate the expertise, value, and timely access to high-acuity care offered at The Urgency Room. It's been a big success story for the organization and we're excited to expand.



Regional expansion

A decade ago, approximately 100 EPPA physicians and two advanced practice clinicians (APCs) served patients at five partner sites. Today, more than 270 physicians and nearly 70 APCs work at 14 partner sites and three Urgency Room locations.



Robust staffing

Clinical staffing is a continuing priority, and this year nearly every zone is completely staffed for the first time since the pandemic. This has led to a dramatic increase in professional satisfaction, retention, and engagement across the organization.

Though challenges persist, EPPA is entering a new phase—one filled with better balance and brighter possibilities.

Indispensable Partners in Healthcare Delivery

EPPA's impact extends far beyond the walls of the emergency departments we operate in. Our reputation for expert collaboration and high performance creates a unique level of trust among our partners. Our clinicians' involvement spans high-impact positions that influence not only one hospital or clinic but shape care within entire health systems.

"Our partners really value our perspective because emergency medicine touches all the specialties. We work with everybody."

-Dr. Jill Donofrio

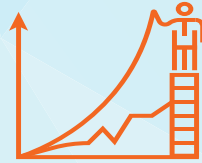


2

Running an Agile Group

EPPA has stood the test of time because we quickly adapt to current circumstances and anticipate challenges. Our ongoing quality initiatives and the Scribe Program illustrate how we flex to meet a changing world.

The quality team focused on two big initiatives this year to ensure EPPA continues to excel in our field.



MIPS Program and Quality-Based Reimbursement

MIPS, or the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System, is a federal program that ties physician reimbursement to quality metrics rather than volume. MIPS scores are becoming a standard for evaluating physician groups, potentially acting as a “common currency” for quality across groups.

“We’ve always pursued excellence in delivering high-quality care to our patients,” reports Dr. Peter Currie, director of quality for EPPA. “The MIPS program ties financial impact to those quality measures.”

EPPA is working with several partners who can help document and track the required quality data. “This is one of the first times we’ve been able to measure our clinical performance on a large scale. It’s exciting to see the impact we’re having on people’s lives,” says Dr. Currie.



Risk Mitigation

The malpractice landscape in Minnesota has shifted, with larger jury awards and a less favorable environment for physicians. In addition, a recent Supreme Court ruling changed the liability structure, making health systems potentially liable for physician decisions even if they’re independently employed.

EPPA is proactively working on several strategies to reduce risk for our clinicians and hospital partners—such as building education and awareness among our group, implementing checklists to encourage thorough evaluation before patient discharge, and enhanced peer discussions of cases for shared learning.

Patient Testimonial

**“For such a scary situation for myself and my son,
the team at The Urgency Room was amazing!!
Thank you for taking care of my kiddo!”**

EPPA Scribe Program

The EPPA Scribe Program remains a vital part of EPPA's mission to deliver excellent patient care by equipping clinicians with essential documentation support. Over the past year, the program has undergone a significant renaissance, marked by agility, innovation, and a renewed focus on education and training.

Recruitment and Hiring

- The program successfully rebounded from challenges in scribe recruiting, conducting over 280 interviews and onboarding nearly 200 new hires.
- Efforts to improve recruitment have included greater campus presence and refinement of the onboarding process, resulting in the selection of higher-quality candidates.

Innovation and Technology

- In the past few years, we've seen an explosion of new technology. The Scribe Program is actively engaged in working to find solutions that will provide efficient support to clinicians in a variety of ways.
- The program is actively exploring artificial intelligence (AI) solutions to enhance documentation processes.
- Advanced communication tools, including RingCentral and Microsoft Teams, have been integrated to improve collaboration and education delivery.

Training and Education

- A new History of Present Illness (HPI) Lab provides trainees with virtual/mock shift experiences, enabling them to practice chart creation and refine their documentation skills through increased repetitions.
- The Learning Management System (LMS) was upgraded to support improved training materials.

Enhanced Provider Support

- The program continues to adapt its split-shift and shared-scribe models to align with clinician needs during peak ED volumes, guided by medical directors and zone council leadership.
- Provider onboarding now includes the opportunity for 1:1 Epic/facility orientation sessions to facilitate seamless integration of new clinicians into EPPA workflows.

Program Outcomes

- Surveys from scribes indicate increased comfort and capability.
- The program has solidified its place in the clinician recruitment pipeline, with former scribes frequently transitioning into new physician and APC roles within EPPA.

Through these initiatives, the EPPA Scribe Program has demonstrated a commitment to supporting clinicians, enhancing patient care, and fostering the next generation of healthcare professionals.



3

Prepping for Long-Term Success

A year ago, new roles were created to show just how important APCs are to EPPA's long-term success. Dr. Kaveesh Maharaj was elected APC Medical Director, and Colleen Weed, PA-C, was named APC manager.

Since those changes, the roster of APCs rose from 45 to 68. And significant strides were made in enhancing the APC experience by revamping the training program and creating a sustainable model for retaining and empowering APCs in their roles.

“We’ve taken the program in a new direction,” Weed says. “And morale is at an all-time high.”

Revamping the APC Training Program

Dr. Maharaj and Colleen Weed transformed the APC training process. They revamped the curriculum to be more accessible and efficient through multiple targeted adjustments. Additionally, Weed is participating in an American College of Emergency Physicians Teaching Fellowship to further strengthen EPPA’s in-house training excellence.

- A new digital textbook is supplemented with podcasts so trainees can integrate learning into their daily routines.
- Monthly education days offer trainees access to guest lecturers and a chance to lead portions of the teaching. This peer-driven learning fosters greater knowledge retention.
- Hands-on training days give APCs opportunities to work side by side with experienced providers to build confidence and sharpen clinical skills.
- Weeklong boot camps were given to two cohorts of APCs before their first shifts.

- New milestone tracking gives trainees concrete tools to mark their progress. It’s paired with regular check-ins throughout the year to ensure continuous growth and development.

Building Retention and Engagement

Alongside training innovations for new APCs, the team works to ensure all APCs feel a sense of ownership and engagement.

- A new compensation package introduced several enhancements, including moving APCs to contracted employees for greater job security, competitive pay, and a provision for long-term APCs to reduce their weekend shifts without significantly affecting their pay.
- An open-door policy within APC leadership has led to APCs feeling valued and heard. “Colleen has done an incredible job at sitting down with people and forging a personalized leadership approach,” says Dr. Maharaj.
- A profound cultural shift has occurred within the APC community. Both Dr. Maharaj and Weed report that APCs have demonstrated a newfound sense of pride in supporting one another. Whether it’s covering shifts for a colleague, celebrating milestones together, or attending social events, the APCs have created a close-knit community.

Looking Ahead

As the APC program continues to grow, Dr. Maharaj and Weed have plans to make the program even better. “APCs are an invaluable resource to our communities and our organization,” says Dr. Maharaj.

Weed agrees. “All the changes we’ve made demonstrate a significant statement by EPPA. APCs are a permanent part of the organization and are a critical part of how EPPA runs.”



4

A New Era for The Urgency Room

The Urgency Room has experienced significant growth and change. The team has successfully navigated the challenges of a fluctuating healthcare landscape, positioning themselves as a reliable, high-acuity care option in the East Metro—and soon, beyond.

According to The Urgency Room Medical Director, Dr. Craig Matticks, the past two years have been some of the most successful the group has ever had.

“The Urgency Room was designed to ease the burden on our hospital partners by serving patients who don’t necessarily need to be admitted for care,” says Matticks. “We’re really seeing the vision for The Urgency Room come to fruition.”

A Bold Step Forward

One notable development is The Urgency Room’s upcoming expansion into the West Metro, with a fourth location planned for Golden Valley in September 2025. “After conversations with our partners, we felt it was time to bring our unique blend of services to a new community,” Matticks says.

The Golden Valley expansion is expected to address the area’s high demand for immediate, high-quality care without excessive wait times, a hallmark of The Urgency Room model.

Strength in Stability

One of the challenges The Urgency Room faced in recent years was recruiting and retaining healthcare talent across all roles. The pandemic left a lasting impact on healthcare, making it challenging to recruit for all the roles that keep The Urgency Room running smoothly.

This led the team to focus on redesigning staffing strategies, and The Urgency Room is now fully staffed for the first time in years. This allows the team to focus on operational efficiencies and building a strong team culture.

Creating Name Recognition

Telehealth continues to be a successful service offering for The Urgency Room, often wowing patients with its rapid service and fast answers. It’s proven to be a powerful vehicle for name recognition.

Five-Star Quality and Consistency

The high-complexity labs at all three locations of The Urgency Room achieved Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) certification from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) without any deficiencies or findings. “This is an incredible achievement,” says Dr. Matticks. “All three labs passing without any corrective actions required is a testament to our team and its leaders’ dedication to quality and process improvement. And it strengthens our ability to provide the highest quality of care.”

With a foundation of success, a committed workforce, and strategic growth plans, The Urgency Room is well-positioned to continue its mission of providing exceptional, high-acuity care to the Twin Cities community.



Patient Testimonial

"Everything was great from the moment we walked into the lobby! Checking in was so easy and we were seen immediately. A nurse came into our room right away and a PA saw our son shortly after. Every person was amazing, very compassionate, and helpful."

5

The Power of Collaborative Care

EPPA partners with five health systems across Minnesota to deliver compassionate, high-value care to patients of all ages. Through its dedication to innovative training, strategic partnerships, and adaptable solutions, EPPA provides top-tier emergency care throughout the state.

Our unique Zone model allows local leadership and decision making for each of our health system partners.

The Allina Zone



Zone Patient Volume:

152,078*



Allina Health Buffalo Hospital

Medical Director: Dr. Laura Carroll-Contreras

Allina Health Cambridge Medical Center

Medical Director: Dr. Luke Dandeleit

Allina Health Mercy Hospital

Medical Director: Dr. Allison Houston

Allina Health Mercy Hospital—Unity Campus

Medical Director: Dr. Eric Haug

*Annualized

Allina Health Buffalo Hospital

- Buffalo Hospital's Emergency Department and Med Surg/SCU team were awarded the "Safety, Quality & Experience Best Performer Traveling Trophy" for July. The award recognizes Buffalo's exceptional performance in the CMS Severe Sepsis and Septic Shock Management Bundle (SEP-1), a seven-part process focused on rapid sepsis recognition and early intervention. With a 69% compliance rate in Q1 2024, Buffalo achieved the highest SEP-1 score in the Allina Health system, outperforming the national average of 60%.
- Buffalo Hospital is on a winning streak. This year it received a five-star CMS rating, putting it in the top 10% of hospitals in the state and country. It received a Leap Frog Grade A and a Becker's Top 100 Hospital rating.
- Buffalo has introduced Ceribell, a point-of-care seizure-testing tool that helps identify subclinical seizures in patients with undifferentiated altered mental status. This capability allows Buffalo to retain and treat patients locally, reducing the need for transfers and enhancing care for nonepileptic seizure cases.
- Recently recertified as a stroke-ready facility, Buffalo Hospital can now retain certain stroke patients who previously required transfers, improving patient outcomes through timely care.
- The Buffalo Hospital's mission is to keep care close to home. The ED team has increased telehealth services for stroke specialists and intensivists, which has led to a decline in transfers. Plans are underway to introduce nephrology services to the hospital's growing telehealth capabilities.

"Our team's focus on continuous improvement and rapid response saves lives—and sets a new standard in sepsis care in the Allina system. It's inspiring to see the dedication and commitment to excellence within the ED and across our hospital."

—Dr. Laura Carroll-Contreras, Medical Director



“EPPA’s integration between our teams and the larger healthcare systems we’re a part of is really unique. This integration and trust allow deeper collaboration that benefits providers and results in positive patient outcomes.”

—Dr. Luke Dandelet, Medical Director

Allina Health Cambridge Medical Center

- The EPPA team at Cambridge Medical Center has focused on improving MIPS quality measures and has shown consistent progress in following best practices and delivering high standards of care.
- The medical center has seen a steady increase in patient volumes. To meet the growth, several new physicians and APCs joined the team. This has allowed providers to work more efficiently, reduce overall workload, and enhance job satisfaction.



Allina Health Mercy Hospital

- Mercy Hospital discontinued its inpatient pediatric hospitalist service. This change led to a new opportunity to collaborate with Hennepin County Medical Center's ED and pediatric ICU. The team has built a strong partnership to enhance pediatric care.
- Boarding remains a major challenge across the hospital, with ongoing efforts to improve patient flow and free up space in the emergency department. Mercy's ED team continues to demonstrate its adaptability, often treating patients in triage, chairs, or hallways when needed.
- EPPA headquarters staff played a critical role in achieving successful credentialing of all EPPA clinicians working at all three Allina sites. This greatly enhances staffing flexibility and bolsters professional satisfaction for the team.

"Our team members are incredibly efficient and resilient under challenging conditions with complex and high-acuity patients. We continue to see some of the largest numbers of patients-per-hour within EPPA. Everyone has done an amazing job at being creative as they work to get in front of patients. We're lucky to have such a vast talent pool at Mercy."

—Dr. Allison Houston, Medical Director



“We’re one hospital with two distinctly different locations. This year, there was a large repositioning project, and we put a tremendous amount of effort into ensuring the changes don’t negatively impact patients. It’s still a work in progress, but we’re grateful for the help of our Mercy Campus colleagues, who’ve helped us maintain the appropriate level of care for our patients, even in a time of transition.”

—Dr. Eric Haug, Medical Director



Allina Health Mercy Hospital—Unity Campus

- A facility repositioning project resulted in closing the operating room at Unity Campus and converting the intensive care unit into a specialty care unit. The team has worked with consultants to find ways to maintain a presence at Unity Campus via telehealth or daily rounding to ensure patients can access the care they need.
- Last summer, Allina Health opened the Center for Mental Health and Addiction with more than 46,000 square feet dedicated to providing services. This new facility bolsters mental health care within Allina.

Plans are in place to expand specialty consultations via telehealth to maintain patient care at Unity Campus whenever possible.

- To minimize delays and maintain patient care quality, the Unity Campus ED team worked closely with partners at the Mercy Campus on improving transportation and communication processes so critical patients can promptly transfer to Mercy Campus.
- A reconfiguration of the triage area created four semi-private spaces, allowing providers to conduct minor procedures, discussions, and discharges more efficiently. This space update has streamlined operations, helping the team manage congestion and improve provider workflow.

The CentraCare Zone



Zone Patient Volume:

96,682*



CentraCare Monticello Hospital
Medical Director: Dr. Andrew Winter

CentraCare Rice Memorial Hospital
Medical Director: Dr. Dennis Gillen

CentraCare St. Cloud Hospital
Medical Director: Dr. Kurt Belk

*Annualized

CentraCare Health Monticello Hospital

- Dr. Andrew Winter became the medical director of the CentraCare Monticello Hospital ED on July 1, 2024.
- The ED team ran a successful pilot of vital sign-monitoring equipment that will now be rolled out to the entire health system.
- The radiology suites, which are attached to the ED, were just remodeled, including upgrades to equipment and space. Additionally, the ED received more user-friendly equipment carts.
- Patient engagement scores are consistently on the rise due to work with a consultant who created a hospital-wide plan. Phase 1 focused on communication and perception in the patient relationship. Phase two will focus on workflow, and provider and nurse training.

“The Monticello ED is one of EPPA’s smaller-volume EDs. Despite the lower volume, we still have good pathology and opportunities to use our ED skills on a regular basis. The nursing leadership is motivated to make an impact on patient care, and the department is well staffed with RNs and ED techs. Monticello ED runs well and has a lot of potential for patient and professional satisfaction. I’m excited to see our success stories in the coming year.”

—Dr. Andrew Winter, Medical Director



"We live in a scary world, and we have a lot of brave ED providers who still go to work every day with positive attitudes. I think that's quite extraordinary."

—Dr. Dennis Gillen, Medical Director



CentraCare Health Rice Memorial Hospital

- This year was marked by both achievements and challenges for the EPPA team in Willmar. In April, a hospital employee was stabbed by a patient, as reported by Minnesota Public Radio. The team went to work immediately to support the staff and work on strengthening facility safety. Numerous safety improvements were implemented across the ED, including installing alarm buttons, cameras, door locks, and tinted glass for added protection in high-risk areas. The ED also adjusted entry protocols to increase security.

In addition, EPPA implemented a new workplace violence reporting system, allowing staff to report incidents easily via a QR code system. This initiative fosters a safer environment by tracking incidents and providing peer-to-peer support for staff affected by violence.

- The Willmar Hospital ED now has dedicated emergency-trained providers thanks to their partnership with EPPA, which has staffed the ER full-time for nearly two years. This has brought consistent, high-level emergency care to the community.

- The EPPA team introduced case reviews, added new quality-assurance initiatives, and participated in projects such as Minnesota Point-of-Care Ultrasound—all to continually improve clinical skills and safety.
- Recruiting efforts were highly successful this year, resulting in a stable core team of emergency medicine providers in the Willmar Hospital ED and reducing reliance on temporary staff. This achievement has helped stabilize the ED, increased patient satisfaction, and prompted positive community feedback.

CentraCare Health St. Cloud Hospital

- The team successfully recruited seven physicians during 2024-2025, with three more physicians scheduled to join the team in fall 2025. Efforts are underway to develop a mentorship program for new physicians to build cohesion and camaraderie within the group.
- In March 2024, the group implemented a provider-in-triage (PIT) model to ensure patients are seen as quickly as possible. The PIT model was paired with a patient-experience challenge that introduced specific strategies to communicate with patients. The results were so extraordinary that the communication methods were rolled out to all three locations in the CentraCare Zone. These efforts have led to the highest patient-experience scores the zone has ever had.

"Since March 2024, we've had the best patient experience scores in our history. We're working to ensure that our team of incredible physicians and APCs regularly hear the positive feedback we get from patients about the hard work they do every day for the communities within the CentraCare Zone."

—Dr. Kurt Belk, Medical Director



The HealthPartners Zone



Zone Patient Volume:

73,193*



HealthPartners Hutchinson Health Hospital
Medical Director: Dr. Luke Helland

HealthPartners Olivia Hospital
Medical Director: Dr. Luke Helland

HealthPartners Park Nicollet Methodist Hospital
Medical Director: Dr. Jill Donofrio

*Annualized

"It's a privilege to provide top-level emergency care to our outlying communities and bring a higher level of care than they've historically had. For example, we had a pediatric cardiac resuscitation that went well. We utilized our partners at the Children's Hospital through the eNICU and one of our EPPA partners did a phenomenal job running that code. The patient did well and the specialists we worked with were all complimentary of the care we delivered."

—Dr. Luke Helland, Medical Director



HealthPartners Hutchinson Health Hospital

- In collaboration with leadership and Wold Architects, plans are underway to expand the ED to double its current size in spring 2025. The redesigned ED will feature:
 - Two new rooms within a behavioral health suite to enhance patient and staff safety.
 - An expanded triage area to improve patient flow and accessibility.
- In 2024, the team started a new initiative to combine triage processes for the ED and Urgent Care. This project aims to address a long-standing patient dissatisfaction issue, in which patients often arrive at Urgent Care only to be redirected to the ED due to the complexity of their condition.

By developing a unified triage process with input from the ED and Urgent Care nurse managers, the teams will be able to streamline care and direct patients to the appropriate department from the start. Several technology solutions are being explored to support this process.

- Enhanced point-of-care ultrasound capabilities were introduced in fall 2024. ED physicians can now order, save, and share ultrasound images with consultants and specialists. This system allows for image archiving and billing, enhancing the ED's diagnostic and collaborative capabilities.

HealthPartners Olivia Hospital

- A new review process was rolled out for providers in Olivia, combining clinical and administrative metrics to offer comprehensive feedback. This initiative allows providers to set annual goals and measure their progress year over year.
- EPPA has worked to bring the Minnesota Point-of-Care Ultrasound Project to providers at Olivia Hospital. This grant-funded program provides training in essential ultrasound skills so providers can work toward credentialing, enhance their diagnostic capabilities, and better serve their patient population.
- The EPPA team also set up a training day for Olivia healthcare providers at the HealthPartners Simulation Center. The day included training in critical emergency-medicine skills such as working with difficult airways and resuscitation.

"We work within a system where we can get patients where they need to be or get them the level of care they need while also providing care in their own community."

—Dr. Luke Helland, Medical Director



“Our team has faced immense challenges, from post-COVID staffing changes to boarding issues and critical supply shortages. Through it all, they’ve shown unparalleled leadership, dedication, and kindness. Our incredible patient-experience scores reflect the extraordinary level of care and compassion our team provides. It hasn’t been easy, but we’ve created such a high-performing team that we’re often held up within HealthPartners as a case study for success.”

—Dr. Jill Donofrio, Medical Director

HealthPartners Park Nicollet Methodist Hospital

- The emergency department has focused heavily on pediatric safety, running pediatric mock codes every other month in collaboration with the simulation lab to enhance readiness for critical pediatric cases.
- Despite challenging boarding conditions, the team is seeing top-tier patient experience scores with patients reporting they feel cared for, listened to, and engaged with when they have questions.
- The team brought in the Healthy Workforce Institute consulting group to help the department improve communication, collaboration, and team engagement. Both physicians and APCs participated in the curriculum to build a high-performing team. The results have inspired other departments to learn the model.
- The ED was nominated for the Methodist Hospital President’s Award for their work in developing a PIT model. Led by Assistant Medical Director Kendal Farrar and Quality Improvement Assistant Director Mark Bergstrand, the PIT model helped reduce left-without-being-seen rates to below 3%.



The MHealth Fairview Zone



Zone Patient Volume:

130,286*



MHealth Fairview Ridges Hospital
Medical Director: Dr. John Houghland

MHealth Fairview Southdale Hospital
Medical Director: Dr. Brandon Trigger

*Annualized

"It's been incredibly rewarding to see the positive changes from our new care model. The collaboration with our nursing leaders and the broader EPPA team has allowed us to reimagine patient flow, making the department more efficient—and resulting in staff morale that's stronger than it's been in years."

—Dr. John Houghland, Medical Director



MHealth Fairview Ridges Hospital

- Like many EPPA sites, MHealth Fairview Ridges Hospital, the third-largest ED in Minnesota, has struggled with boarding. The team has worked for two years to develop a completely revised front-end care model. The transformation was fully implemented in January 2024, resulting in:
 - Reduced wait times, with patients now being seen within 30 minutes—a national benchmark for emergency care.
 - A significant drop in the left-without-being-seen rate, down from 5% to just 2%.
 - Record-high patient satisfaction, the best the department has seen in the past eight years.
- The new care model has been so successful that other EPPA sites are looking at how they can adopt it for their locations. It's also positively impacted staff morale. Nurses report a more stable work environment with less stress around lobby congestion and safety issues. Physicians can now see most of their patients at the start of their shifts, enabling more control over their schedules and better on-time shift completion.
- Both Fairview Ridges and Fairview Southdale hospitals have excelled in reducing Foley catheter usage, minimizing the risk of catheter-associated urinary tract infections, a key quality metric for patient safety.

MHealth Fairview Southdale

- Southdale is expanding as a referral center, taking in more complex patients from other MHealth Fairview hospitals, including St. John's Hospital, Woodwinds Hospital, Northland Medical Center, and Lakes Medical Center. This shift brings challenges and opportunities, as the hospital adapts to an influx of higher-acuity cases in the ED and inpatient units.
- The ED has restructured its intake model, allowing doctors to assess and manage patients more efficiently using a vertical track model. This approach enables quicker patient evaluations and more streamlined discharges, even from the lobby area, meeting new norms in emergency medicine.
- The EPPA team at Southdale Hospital is a leader in driving stroke research. They've partnered with the stroke neurology team and have enrolled dozens of patients in international research studies—including the TIMELESS and MOST studies, both published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Our enrollment rates are notably high, surpassing those of major academic centers. Southdale enrolled the third most patients worldwide in the TIMELESS study.
- Year-to-date patient experience scores are exceeding targets by 6%, a notable achievement despite space and capacity challenges within the hospital.
- The team at Southdale has welcomed eight new physicians and several APCs in the last year, strengthening the ED team and expanding its capacity to serve the community.

"Southdale is finding its feet as a referral and receiving center, which brings both challenges and growth opportunities. Our team is adapting remarkably well, managing higher-acuity cases with a new intake process and delivering high-quality care despite space limitations."

— Dr. Brandon Trigger, Medical Director



The North Memorial Zone



Zone Patient Volume:

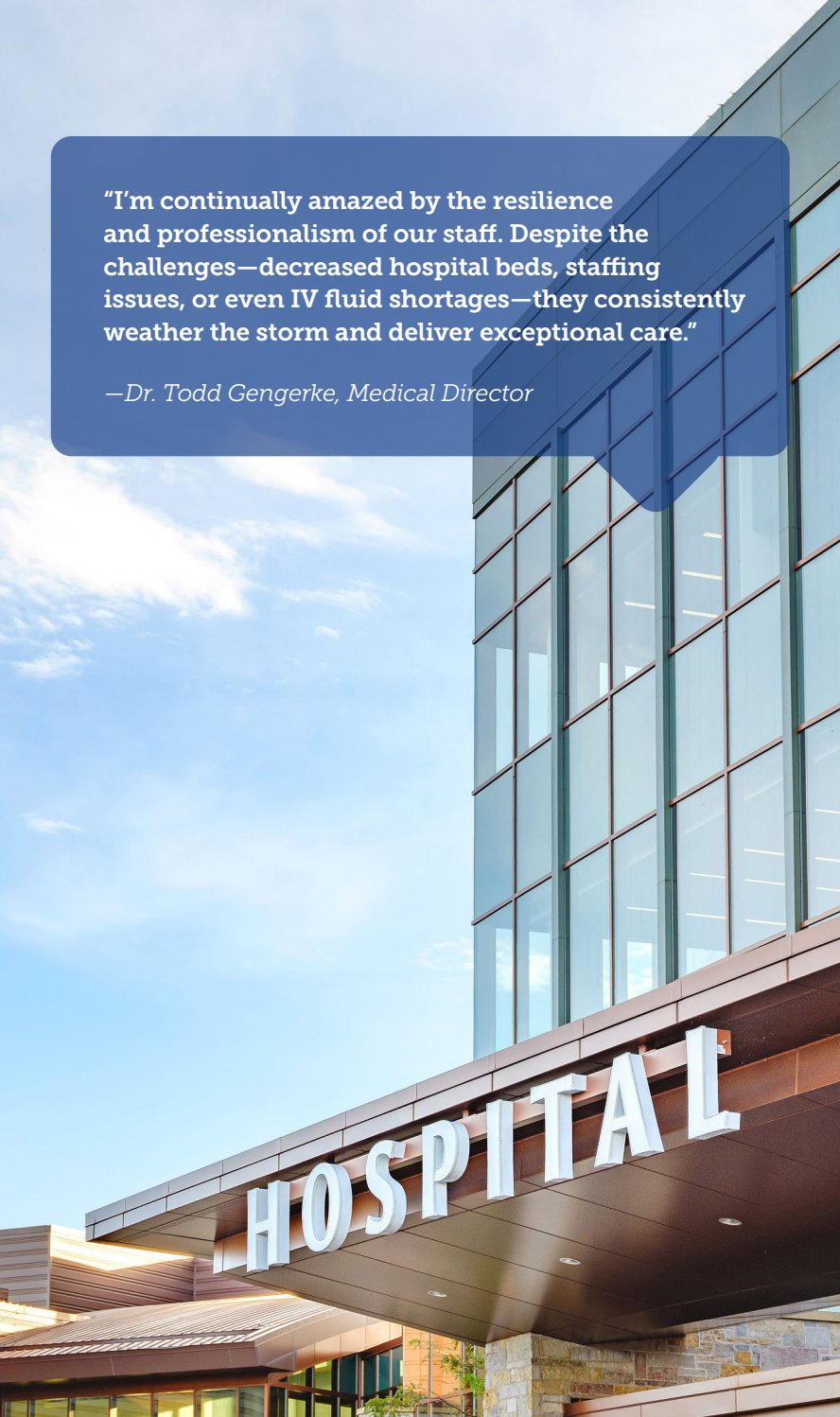
113,400*



North Memorial Health Maple Grove Hospital
Medical Director: Dr. Todd Gengerke

North Memorial Health Robbinsdale Hospital
Medical Director: Dr. Christopher Palmer

*Annualized



"I'm continually amazed by the resilience and professionalism of our staff. Despite the challenges—decreased hospital beds, staffing issues, or even IV fluid shortages—they consistently weather the storm and deliver exceptional care."

—Dr. Todd Gengerke, Medical Director

North Memorial Health Maple Grove Hospital

- The Maple Grove Hospital ED saw a steady increase in patient volume, reaching an estimated 57,500 visits this year—up from 55,000 last year.
- Despite the rising numbers, the left-without-being-seen rate fell to 2.75%, a significant improvement from the 4% rate of recent years.
- Staffing levels have stabilized, with the ED now fully staffed by employed nurses and technicians rather than relying on agency staff. The consistency of the team enhances the quality of patient care and fosters a strong understanding of the department's processes and culture.
- The Maple Grove and Robbinsdale zones welcomed eight new physicians and six new APCs, contributing to a vibrant, growing medical team. At Maple Grove Hospital, the APC program has grown, increasing coverage from one shift to two daily, supporting the department's rising volume and providing essential care.
- Improvements to alternative care spaces were made in the past year, including upgraded lighting and equipment that allows for more efficient and higher-quality care in nontraditional areas.

North Memorial Health Robbinsdale Hospital

- The group has been through a lot, from personal tragedies to injuries, yet they always pull together, supporting each other both personally and professionally. “Serving each other is just as important as serving our patients, and that sense of community has been vital to our resilience,” says Dr. Palmer.
- The team’s commitment to each other and to delivering great care is evident in each patient interaction. In a heart-tugging case, the team chose to take responsibility for an autistic child by finding the best environment despite boarding challenges. Dr. Palmer reports that the team decided “it wasn’t going to be best for the patient to move to an observation unit, so we did what needed to be done to give him the best location for care even if was inconvenient for us. That’s medicine at its finest.”
- The team successfully filled staffing positions for the upcoming year with high-quality candidates who share EPPA’s commitment to care. This year’s recruitment success ensures a solid team foundation for 2025, demonstrating EPPA’s ability to attract top talent.
- Patient safety and quality improvement have remained a central focus, with initiatives addressing incidental findings, rechecks of vital signs, and follow-ups to ensure thorough patient care.

“When candidates ask me why I work here, I tell them the top three reasons are the people, the people, and the people. I don’t even look at who I’m scheduled with, because I know everyone is great, works hard, and communicates effectively. We can take pride in being the type of providers who don’t hesitate to choose what’s right for our patients over what’s convenient.”

—Dr. Christopher Palmer, Medical Director



Patient Testimonial

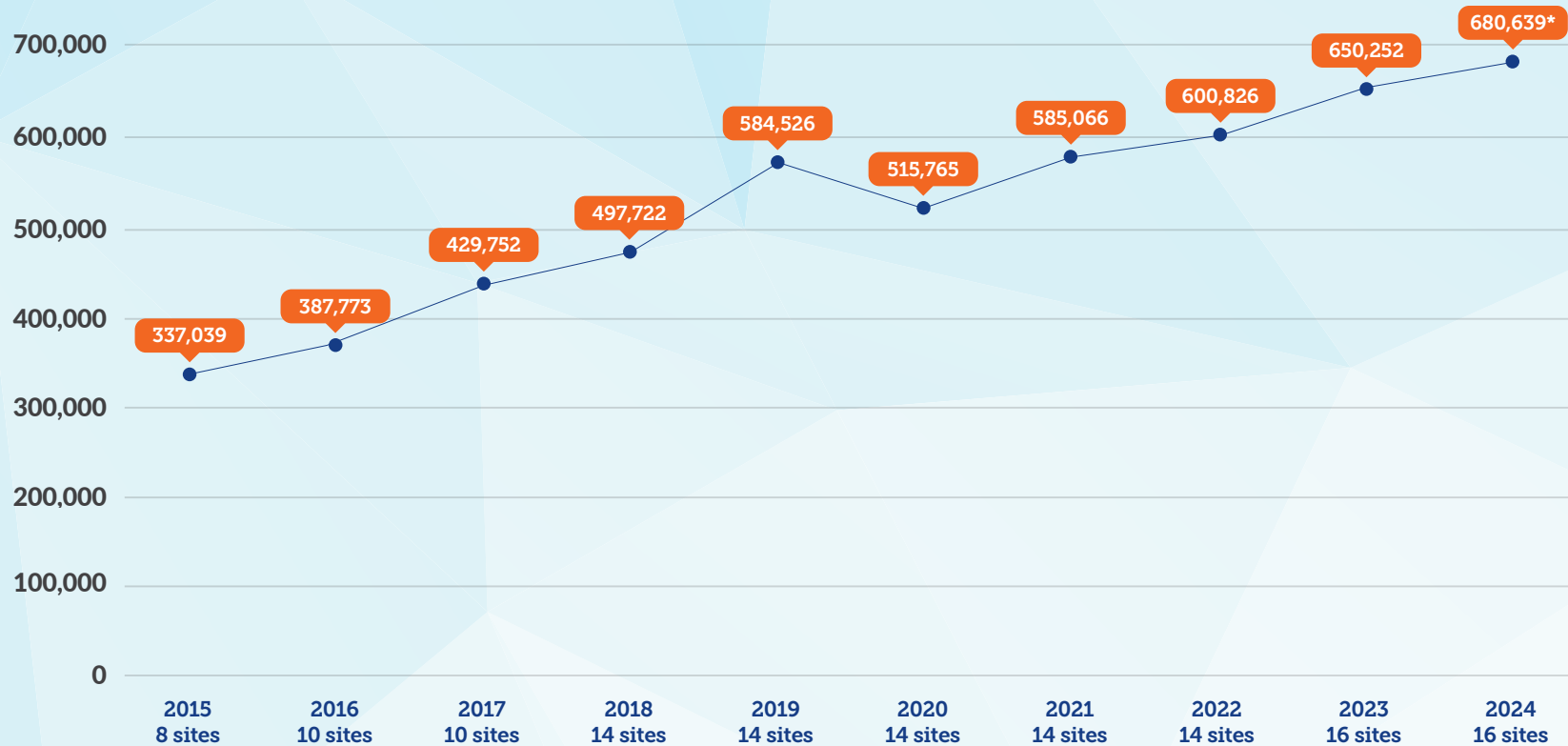
"I came into the ER with a shoulder injury. I was so impressed with my doctor's ability to quickly assess the situation. I immediately felt I could not be in better hands."

6

A Decade of Patient Care

The past decade has seen a steady climb in patient volumes. However, the resources and space to meet those year-over-year increases haven't materialized. One constant has remained through this massive growth: the EPPA team's dedication and commitment to do what's right for each patient.

Each of the numbers below represent a direct care encounter between an EPPA clinician and a patient. We've cared for people in emergency departments, private rooms, and hallways. Wherever we see our patients, we strive to ensure that our communities have the best care possible.



*Annualized

The data in this chart reflects total patient volumes from all the sites where we deliver care to patients, including our hospital partners and The Urgency Room. It also includes telehealth volumes in 2023 and 2024.



EXCELLENCE IN EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Patient Testimonial

"In 2011 I visited your emergency room to try to get my hands on painkillers. I'd been turned down by several different hospitals, where most of the doctors just saw some pill-popping junkie wasting their time, which I was.

But when I visited your hospital things were different. The ER doctor saw how many prescriptions I had for narcotics in recent months. He very politely called BS on my whole story. He was the only doctor to sit down, look me right in the eyes, and ask what was really going on. He didn't just shun me and kick me out the door. I haven't touched a narcotic since.

Thirteen years later, I'm getting ready to buy my first home, buy the company I work for, and run my first marathon. I'll always mark that doctor's small act of compassion as the exact point of my turnaround."

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