



# Mackinac Straits Hospital



When executives at Mackinac Straits Hospital in Michigan's Upper Peninsula began to plan for a much-needed new facility, they wanted as much flexibility as possible to accommodate future changes. They were pleasantly surprised to find that Herman Miller furniture was very affordable, and that its modularity provided them with even more flexibility than they'd anticipated.

**HEALTHCARE;  
ST. IGNACE, MICHIGAN**

**Topic:**

*Change  
Efficiency  
Health*

**Application:**

*Healthcare: Administrative Areas  
Healthcare: Caregiver  
Work Environments  
Healthcare: ER/Treatment  
Healthcare: Laboratory  
Healthcare: Materials Management  
Healthcare: Patient Care  
Healthcare: Pharmacy*

**Project Scope:**

*85,000 square feet*

**Herman Miller Product:**

*Action Office® System  
Casework  
Co/Struc® System  
Ethospace® Nurses' Station  
Procedure/Supply Carts  
Caper® Chairs  
Equa 2® Chairs  
Mirra® Chairs  
Nemschoff® Serenity® III  
Treatment Chairs  
Meridian® Filing and Storage*

**Year Completed:**

*2010*



Mackinac Straits Hospital in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, built in the 1950s, was in desperate need of a new facility. As a small, 25-bed "critical access" hospital (meaning they have no critical care unit, but are within 25 miles of a larger facility), their previous facility was a "mishmash" of outdated furniture and equipment.

CEO Rodney Nelson knew he wanted to equip the new hospital with as many modular solutions as possible, so they could make changes and adapt to future needs, something they could not do with built-in casework.

They also wanted their new facility to look good, so that patients would feel confident that the care they were getting was every bit as professional and up-to-date as in larger facilities.

When it came time to select furniture, Mr. Nelson says one of the best things he did was make a trip to the Herman Miller headquarters in Zeeland, Michigan. "It gave us the opportunity to see all the different solutions they offered and how their ergonomic and other features could benefit our employees and our patients."

Another smart decision was working with WorkSquared, a Herman Miller dealership in Traverse City with lots of hospital experience. That proved to be valuable throughout the entire process, from planning to move-in day.

## MODULAR SOLUTIONS

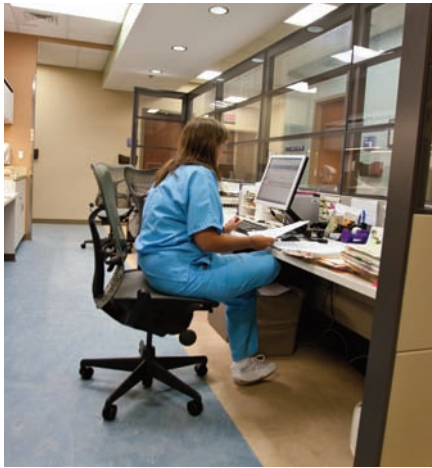
"We worked closely with the URS architects to lay out all the spaces in the hospital using Herman Miller solutions because Rod wanted as much flexibility as he could get," explains Laura Agabashian, WorkSquared. "We essentially matched the furniture and modular casework to meet the requirements of each department. Because Herman Miller offers such a variety of solutions, from office furniture to clinical chairs and patient room equipment, we were able to furnish almost the entire hospital using one resource."

"And I was pleasantly surprised to find out how affordable Herman Miller furniture was," adds Mr. Nelson.

"There is a misperception that Herman Miller is expensive," says Agabashian. "But it's very competitive, even with the initial costs. Plus you get the added benefit of flexibility and adaptability, which proves to be so economical later."

[left] Glass panels are ideal for nurses' stations because they can see out but still have privacy.

[right] Modularity was key in areas so that components could be easily moved or changed. The height of a specific overhead storage was lowered for a specific need in this area.



And the service provided by the Herman Miller dealership was outstanding, says Tammy Hartwig, Chief Planning Officer for Mackinac Straits. “They met with every department, one-on-one, to show them how everything was going to be laid out and make sure it was going to meet their needs; that was very helpful.”

WorkSquared also provided some “test” chairs which the employees could try out before making their selections; Mirra chairs proved to be the best fit because of their comfort and ergonomic support.

#### MEETING THE CHALLENGES

A couple of challenges arose for the dealership as they were moving through the planning process: The first was when WorkSquared learned that the building’s size had to be reduced by more than 40,000 square feet because of budget issues. Laura Anderson, Physician Office Manager/Clinic Director, says they did a great job of solving that problem. “They helped us figure out how to make the offices smaller but keep them user friendly.”

The second was the fact that within the hospital is a stand-alone clinic run by and for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. “It’s a completely separate entity and they had their own furniture dealership, but we met with them to ensure that their furnishings would be consistent with the rest of the hospital in terms of finishes and so on,” says Tom Walczak, Account Manager at WorkSquared, adding that this was the first hospital in the U.S. to combine both types of medical practices.

#### TRAINING PROVES HELPFUL

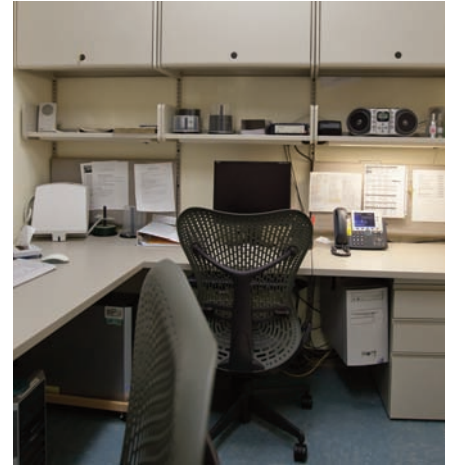
Once the planning stage was complete and furniture selections were made, nursing staff was trained in using some of the new equipment. For example, says Walczak, “We put Co/Struc crash carts in the old hospital’s ER room about a month before the move, so the staff could use them and become familiar with them; it would be one less thing they’d have to learn.”

Herman Miller nurse clinicians were also brought in first, to help staff identify where they’d need C-Lockers and other stand-alone equipment. Then, they went through the components step by step to show nursing staff how they should be stocked to maximize space and efficiencies.

[left] The hospital tested several seating options before selecting the Mirra chair for its comfort and ergonomic support.

[center] Co/Struc modular components were put into the old emergency department (ED) before the move so staff could become familiar with them before using them in the new ED.

[right] Modular shelving and storage solutions allow the pharmacy to be reconfigured easily or even moved to a different area if needs change.



When it came time for moving day, WorkSquared delivered more than furniture. “We coordinated the entire move, which is always challenging with a hospital because legally, you can’t shut down; everything has to be up and running, from the equipment to medical records to the signage on the road; it all has to be well-coordinated,” says Agabashian.

“And they didn’t miss a beat,” says Mr. Nelson of WorkSquared’s efforts.

#### FLEXIBILITY ON MACRO/MICRO LEVELS

The modularity proved to be exactly what hospital executives were hoping for, and they quickly learned how important flexibility is. A combination of Co/Struc and Ethospace work surfaces proved to be ideal for the nurse stations, offices and clinical environments, and they changed some of the frame heights after realizing more privacy was needed in some areas.

As Sally Levell Director of Nursing observes, “Something might seem like a good idea at the planning stage, but you don’t really know how it’s going to work until you live with it awhile. We ended up moving things around a little bit, which we never could have done with built-ins.”

“Just the ability to change a small desktop to a larger one or adjust shelving is so convenient,” agrees Ms. Anderson, adding that movable C-Lockers are great for visiting doctors because they can be kept stocked with specialty items and then rolled out of the way when not in use.

#### MIX AND MATCH

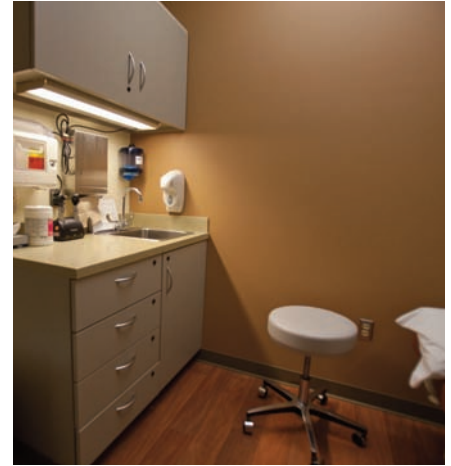
The staff also appreciates the fact that all the parts and pieces match so they can be used in various areas and still be coordinated. “I worked at another hospital with built-ins and it was always a problem when we had to replace something,” explains Ms. Levell. “It would have to be custom made to match, whereas with modular, you have that interchangeability factor, which is so much better.”

Beyond the flexibility of the furniture, staff also likes the glass partitions in the workstations. “It gives them the privacy they need for confidentiality, but they can still see what’s going on, even when seated,” says Barb Davis, Chief Nursing Officer.

[left] Nurses appreciate the fact they can talk over low panels but have privacy while seated.

[center] The Co/Struc components easily adjust up and down in one-inch increments to allow equipment to be placed at proper heights.

[right] Once staff moved into their new spaces, they appreciated the fact that they could change things like shelf height to accommodate personal preferences.



## PATIENT FRIENDLY

Mr. Nelson says they're also very pleased with the patient furniture, noting that the Nemschoff Serenity III Treatment chairs, which include heat and massage functions, are working out very well for the dialysis and oncology patients who have to sit for long periods.

Ms. Davis points out that the rounded edges on the modular sink units in patient rooms have proved safer than traditional square edges. "We've had several instances where patients have fallen against them but haven't injured themselves," she says, adding that the modular pieces are also a lot easier for cleaning.

## FINANCIAL ADVANTAGES

The modular furniture also proved to have a financial advantage, says Mr. Nelson. "If it we had gone with built in cabinetry, it would be part of the facility, with a 20-year depreciation cycle. But with modular, we can depreciate it over five years as a capital expense, so we'll recoup our costs faster. And it also helped us with our construction budget because we leased the furniture so it didn't have to come out of our capital budget."

Ms. Davis adds that, "The furniture is high quality, aesthetically pleasing, safe for patients, easy to keep clean, and looks very modern. Our patients are in awe. They think it's gorgeous. Not only does it look good, it feels good and works well, so everybody is happy."

"It feels like we went from a pup tent to a real hospital," says Mr. Nelson. "It's been a year now and our decisions have been validated. How often do you try to skimp and buy low grade type furniture, then every year have to replace it? If you look at what we have from the appearance and quality standpoints — and from the employee satisfaction standpoint — it's well worth our investment.

"And if we decide in a few years that our pharmacy department has to be relocated, we can just pick up the components and move them."

Photo credit: Lisa Mills of Tony Armour Photography

[left] Action Office layouts and Meridian storage put everything within easy reach.

[center] Oncology and dialysis patients appreciate the heat and massage features of the Nemschoff Serenity III Treatment chairs.

[right] For areas that need a little less flexibility, Casework allows a consistent look with the other Herman Miller products.

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