

## CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

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# Children's Mercy: Where Compassion and Technology Meet

Leading medical professionals reach more children with innovative telemedicine program

### Featured products

- RealPresence Group Series
- RealPresence Centro
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### Benefits

- Expanded specialist reach to rural pediatric patients
- Reduced travel costs and time for patients
- Anesthesiologist collaboration and training



Young patients and their caregivers who enter Children's Mercy Adele Hall are greeted by displays of colorful characters mounted from the ceiling and walls, whimsical designs and vibrant furnishings. But there's much more to this facility than its cheerful décor. Children's Mercy Hospital is consistently ranked among the leading children's hospitals in the nation by multiple sources including *U.S. News & World Report*. For more than 120 years, the 367-bed hospital has provided comprehensive care for children in Kansas City, Missouri and beyond. With a medical staff of more than 750 pediatric specialists in 47 pediatric specialties, Children's Mercy is known for providing high quality and compassionate care for children.

### Putting Patients at the Center

In recent years, Children's Mercy has expanded the reach of its nationally-renowned care through the implementation of its telemedicine program. Dr. Laura Fitzmaurice, Chief Medical Information Officer, stresses that the telemedicine program is about putting the patient at the center. "What's the easiest way for the patient to get their medical care, advice or education? With our telemedicine program, we go where the patient wants to be."

“When we use Polycom, we remove the distance barrier so we’re able to provide the same level of care to patients who live four hours away as those who live 40 minutes away. This technology allows us to be in more than one place at a time.”

Shayla Sullivant, Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist, Children's Mercy

Telemedicine Director Morgan Waller has a passion for getting quality, critical healthcare to rural communities that have barriers to access. With a background in pediatric critical care nursing and information systems, Waller brought the telemedicine program to fruition in 2011, beginning with one rural patient. Today, Children's Mercy offers 27 specialties in three telemedicine locations, with additional sites going live soon.

Developmental and behavioral health telemedicine locations use fully-facilitated encounters. A registered nurse examines the child with digital stethoscope for the heart and lungs, digital otoscopes for the eyes, ears and throat, and accompanies the child on the virtual visit with the doctor. The video interaction is conducted with high-resolution cameras over a secure, HIPAA-compliant Polycom® RealPresence® Group Series video conference platform.

#### Equalizing Levels of Care

Dr. Shayla Sullivant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist at Children's Mercy, sees patients virtually who would otherwise have to drive for hours to see her in the clinic and miss a full day of school or work. The patients and families appreciate being able to have both parents present during the appointment as Dr. Sullivant comes to them. “When we use Polycom, we remove the distance barrier so I’m able to provide the same level of care to patients who live four hours away as those who live 40 minutes away. And this technology allows me to be in more than one place at a time,” Sullivant says.

#### Developing Connections over Video

As a child psychiatrist, Sullivant understands how critical it is to establish a connection with her patients. If she doesn't have rapport with the patient and their families, she can't provide good care. She's found that the generation of patients she serves are extremely comfortable with screens and technology in general, so meeting via telemedicine is second-nature to them. Rather than technology being a detriment to the doctor-patient relationship, the convenience of the telemedicine option makes the experience even better.



#### Improving Patient Satisfaction and Outcomes

On satisfaction surveys, patients consistently rate the telemedicine encounter better or as good as an in-person visit. And it isn't just a perceived benefit. A 2016 study published in *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*, the scientific publication of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) shows that telemedicine for the treatment of asthma can be as effective as an in-person visit.

The study focused on patients who scheduled an appointment to be seen for asthma in the allergy clinic at Children's Mercy Hospital, and who lived long distances from the hospital. These patients were offered a choice to keep their original in-person appointment, or change it to a telemedicine visit. The telemedicine option involved a visit to a local clinic. A control group of patients was seen at the allergy clinic at CMH. The two groups were followed over six months. All of those seen, whether in the clinic or by telemedicine, showed an improvement in asthma control over the six months.

“That is one of the things that makes me so excited to come to work every day. Our patients and families are so grateful to us for providing the service because it's so difficult to drive for hours to get to an appointment. We're getting patients even beyond our regional outreach locations. Getting care has traditionally been a hardship for residents of these rural communities,” Waller says.

With 190 encounters per month, Children's Mercy telemedicine program is big—and it's growing bigger. Waller has plans to expand the telemedicine network in the future. "Moving forward we are going to add a lot more video conferencing solutions to expand developmental and behavioral health services into schools as Missouri's and Kansas' legislative efforts start to support that type of service. I would love to see us in all schools providing services."

## About Polycom

Polycom helps organizations unleash the power of human collaboration. More than 400,000 companies and institutions worldwide defy distance with video, voice and content solutions from Polycom. Polycom and its global partner ecosystem provide flexible collaboration solutions for any environment that deliver the best user experience and unmatched investment protection.

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