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Health Care

How Brooks Rehab pivoted while some lines of business plummeted during height of pandemic 🔑

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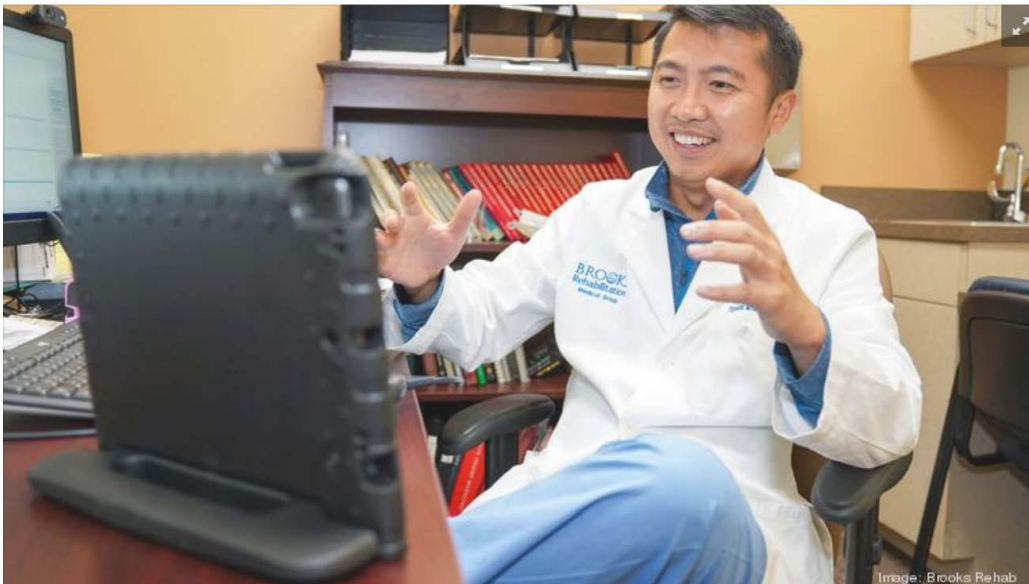


Image: Brooks Rehab

The hospital has employed telemedicine to continue caring for patients.

TRACY DANIEL DAVIS



By **Ellen Schneider** – Reporter, Jacksonville Business Journal
2 hours ago

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Brooks Rehabilitation was able to keep everyone of their employees on board, even as the coronavirus pandemic rocked the healthcare industry and several lines of Brooks' business.

Michael Spigel, COO of Brooks Rehab, said that while they never closed any of their lines of business, they did have to move personnel around in around to accommodate demands as they shifted. The pandemic posed unique challenges for each sector of the business – skilled nursing has increased regulations and patients became wary of having people in their homes, they had to set up a rehab hospital for coronavirus patients while continuing to accept post acute care patients. The fragmented impact meant that some businesses would be more significantly impacted than others.

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"We have 2,600 employees and we, like other systems, had to make decisions around issues like maintaining a healthy and safe environment but also keeping all our employees and workforce intact," Spigel said.

The diverse nature of the Brooks Rehab healthcare system helped to, in some ways, help isolate them from the sweeping impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Rehabilitation hospitals do not rely on elective surgeries the way that other systems are. While the capacities of other post acute care hospitals was reduced by half, the rehab hospital has remained at 90% to 95% of where they were the year before.

In short, spinal cord injuries and cardiac events do not stop happening during a pandemic.

"From a business perspective, our rehab hospital continued to operate at about 92% of where we were pre-covid," Spigel said.

However, Brooks also has a large outpatient therapy network. Of 40 clinics and 500 employees, volumes dropped by 40%. Homecare was also down by 25% and skilled nursing took a 30% to 40% hit.

Skilled nursing was particularly difficult because of the new regulations that were coming out almost daily, Spigel said. There were stories in the media that created a lot of anxiety around patients and employees. They had to implement strict screening to create safe environments and ease the concerns of employees and their families.

Other changes include modified retirement plans and benefits, no company travel and no company-supported continuing education for the remainder of the year, as well as projects and initiatives and projects.

"The cost savings might not be nearly enough to offset the declining revenues that we're going to experience this year," Spigel said.

Spigel said that they can sustain a certain degree of business decline, so long as it doesn't impact the goals and performance of the company, overall.

There were also things that Spigel said they learned from the pandemic, including the value of telehealth. It's going to continue to be an important component of what they do. Previously, telemedicine wasn't a reimbursable service, but almost all insurance providers have been allowing it during the pandemic.

Telemedicine also expands access, but it also allows providers to connect with patients during outstanding circumstances and provide possibly more care than was previously possible. They also redeployed staff to assist patients in making virtual calls to loved ones so that they could stay connected.

"We really have uncovered how important the additional connectivity is, so that's something that we plan to continue past the pandemic," Spigel said.

They've even been using iPads to allow nurses to continue monitoring patients without coming in physical contact with them. They had always done a degree of remote monitoring while patients were at home, but they've expanded and plan to continue to do so.

Now that things are beginning to ramp back up, Spigel says they are awaiting a surge in elective procedures as well as a resurgence of homecare as people become more comfortable in having therapists and skilled nurses back into their homes.

"We eventually expect everything to return at some point to pre-pandemic

level, we can't predict when that may happen," Spigel said.

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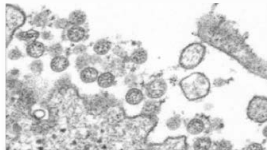
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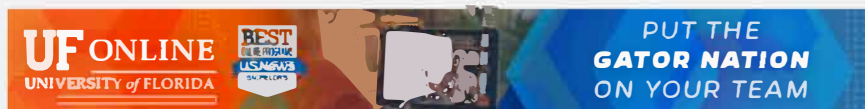
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