

# AN UNEXPECTED DRIVER FOR THE CHC MISSION – HEALTHCARE-SPECIFIC IT

*A Conversation with  
Heart of Ohio Family Health*



**MEDICUS IT**





*Dr. Buhari Mohammed, Chief Executive Officer, and Yammah Morgan, Chief Operating Officer, sat down with Medicus IT to discuss healthcare IT and how the right partner can dramatically and positively impact care and quality of life across a community.*

## THE TWO OF YOU HAVE LED A VERY SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE CENTER FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW. WHAT'S EXCITING ABOUT BEING HERE?

**Dr. Mohammed:** The simple answer is that we are committed to bringing positive change to these communities – access to care, quality of care, quality of life. These neighborhoods have a very high incidence of Medicaid patients – up to 60%, according to UDS data. At the same time, medical care clearly underserved these populations.



We saw an opportunity to make a significant difference, quickly. But first we needed to rebuild the organization to increase patient volume through provider relationships, maximize savings opportunities, and add new services such as nutrition and pharmacies to generate more revenue. We also recognized significant billing problems that needed to be addressed immediately.

In short, it's our mission to take care of everyone, regardless of ability to pay. But first we needed to build an organization that could deliver on that mission.

**Mrs. Morgan:** We also realized that geography provided obstacles for expanding care. So, we added new locations – two initially – and continued our expansion to deliver care where it was needed most.

We now support a broad cross section of central Ohio – 14 zip codes radiating out from Columbus. That reflects a population of over 267,000. 32% of these individuals live under 200% of the federal poverty level. More to the point, 174,000 of these people have no access to primary care, let alone proactive or preventive medicine. More than 35% of our patients don't speak English.

We've been successful. That said, it's never the same challenge or opportunity every day. Success impacts our patients and our staff. We've had to learn how to manage that growth, both internally and by working with our partners to make sure we continue to generate positive results.





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## WHAT DRIVES HEART OF OHIO FAMILY HEALTH'S SUCCESS?

**Dr. Mohammed:** It's our team. We aren't a siloed organization, and we took measured, deliberate steps so that everyone can move faster and with greater agility. That's how we were able to open a new facility at the onset of the COVID pandemic for testing and care, even while everyone else was shutting down.

**Mrs. Morgan:** Now, our challenge is to handle that rapid growth – to build on that improvement and achievement by scaling what makes us effective. And we must be adaptable. For example, we've cared for more pregnant patients through June 1 this year than saw over the entirety of 2022.

## WHAT MADE YOU REALIZE YOU NEEDED TO CHANGE YOUR IT SYSTEMS AND RETHINK YOUR SOLUTIONS PROVIDER?

**Dr. Mohammed:** Actually, IT infrastructure was not an initial focus. We thought changes were cost-prohibitive and we had more immediate concerns. But when we turned to address these needs, our incumbent couldn't move quickly enough, nor could they help us anticipate our future needs.



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By comparison, Medicus gave us a plan and budgeting advice. It was very comprehensive, including backup internet which was essential for our move to EPIC. We knew we made the right decision when they brought a facility back online within a day after an outage – and used what they learned about our systems to plan a stronger, more complete repair plus the scheduling and budget so that we could make it happen.

**Mrs. Morgan:** Much of this growing awareness started with demands for remote access during COVID. We used federal funds to introduce a large number of iPads into our infrastructure. Our previous provider delivered a piecemeal implementation and we never established full oversight into our IT operations. They simply couldn't analyze our operations properly, let alone solve remote operations challenges such as bandwidth, antennae, device management – none of it.

These were significant impacts on our patients. We couldn't properly perform online visits. We had provider login issues and reliability issues. IT rapidly became a critical concern.

To echo Dr. Mohammed, Medicus enabled us to become proactive – to develop a plan for getting from where we were to where we need to be. They've helped us stay on top of upcoming changes for CHC operations without taking us into technological dead ends. We're now much more agile and flexible – and our infrastructure is much more affordable.



A healthcare worker in blue scrubs is smiling and supporting an elderly woman in a striped shirt. The woman is sitting and looking up at the worker. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting. There are orange circles in the top left corner.

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## WHAT ADDITIONAL BENEFITS HAVE YOU RECEIVED THROUGH YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH MEDICUS IT?

**Dr. Mohammed:** Medicus is our full services provider. We even have an on-site tech, and they help us with internal IT staffing and hiring. They've helped us with everything from phone systems to EHR deployments.

**Mrs. Morgan:** Our initial go-live went exceptionally well. Everything was professionally delivered. We received frequent updates and gut-check meetings throughout the process – active communication about expectations, completions, next steps. They were exceptionally accurate and continue to keep their promises and commitments.

**Dr. Mohammed:** Even the “parking lot” items. They didn't miss anything, and we continue that process today. The initial deployment went so well that Ms. Morgan left on vacation just prior to go-live. We were confident of success, but it also was a bit of a test. And everything went smoothly.

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**Mrs. Morgan:** We now rely on Medicus for server maintenance, new equipment setup, EPIC technical calls, vendor relationships, new locations – everything IT. They even helped us choose our VoIP phone system. Medicus is a touchpoint for every new user. They process every open ticket, whether they directly address it or not.

## What are the implications of those benefits for day-to-day operations and Heart of Ohio Family Health's future plans?

**Dr. Mohammed:** They taught us how to use IT to support our growth and our mission.

**Mrs. Morgan:** We get to focus on patient care rather than IT tickets. Our people get to work on that they want to do daily, rather than learn IT or wait for someone to fix things. Sometimes it's the little things that make a difference, such as inventory. Our team has so many fewer things to touch or do that aren't directly related to patient care. From servers to phones to those iPads, it's all under control. And their service is exceptional. The customer response rate is terrific.

**Dr. Mohammed:** It's a true partnership. They like our staff, and we like theirs. They understand the importance of what we do, so they're there when we need them, including evenings and weekends.



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**Medicus is part of the  
Heart of Ohio Family  
Health's team.**

## **WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW ABOUT HEART OF OHIO FAMILY HEALTH AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MEDICUS IT?**

**Mrs. Morgan:** We concentrate on the hardest of the hardest patients, so we need everything to towards that mission. When a bigger company purchased our previous vendor, things went sour. That corporation cared more about profits than patients. That's not Medicus. They understand community health, and the quality of their staff is incredible. They work constantly to resolve issues, and they blend in so well with us that it's never disruptive.

**Dr. Mohammed:** We gladly recommend them, without hesitation. They help support the CHC movement – are built to support the CHC movement. Medicus is part of the Heart of Ohio Family Health's team.

## **About Heart of Ohio Family Health**

- Founded 2003
- Comprehensive personalized health delivered through Community Health Center (CHC) centers across the greater Columbus, Ohio area
- 159 employees
- More than 15,000 patients, 36% served in non-English
- Multiple 2022 quality and community service awards

**For more information  
please visit us at  
[MedicusIT.com](https://www.MedicusIT.com)**

