

## How Huntsville Hospital Increased Medical Value by Investing in Technology

In an Ongoing Mission to Provide World-Class Service and Care, It Increased Efficiency and Expanded Outreach



### Executive Summary

Huntsville Hospital has had a stable growth trajectory over the past 20 years, becoming the second-largest hospital in Alabama. With progress, however, comes challenges. For Huntsville Hospital, costs and staffing struggles — along with a consistent rise in annual billables — prompted a decision to invest in new technology that could help the hospital manage growth and continue to provide a high level of care.

In a quest to transform its lab and improve medical value, Huntsville Hospital partnered with Roche Diagnostics. Huntsville Hospital's transformation reduced direct costs, salary costs and worked hours for billed tests. Ultimately, it helped drive sustained growth so the hospital could continue to expand its outreach and serve the community at large.

#### HUNTSVILLE HOSPITAL AT A GLANCE



**2<sup>nd</sup>** largest  
Alabama hospital



**1,800**  
patient beds



**124,000**  
visits to the  
Emergency  
Department



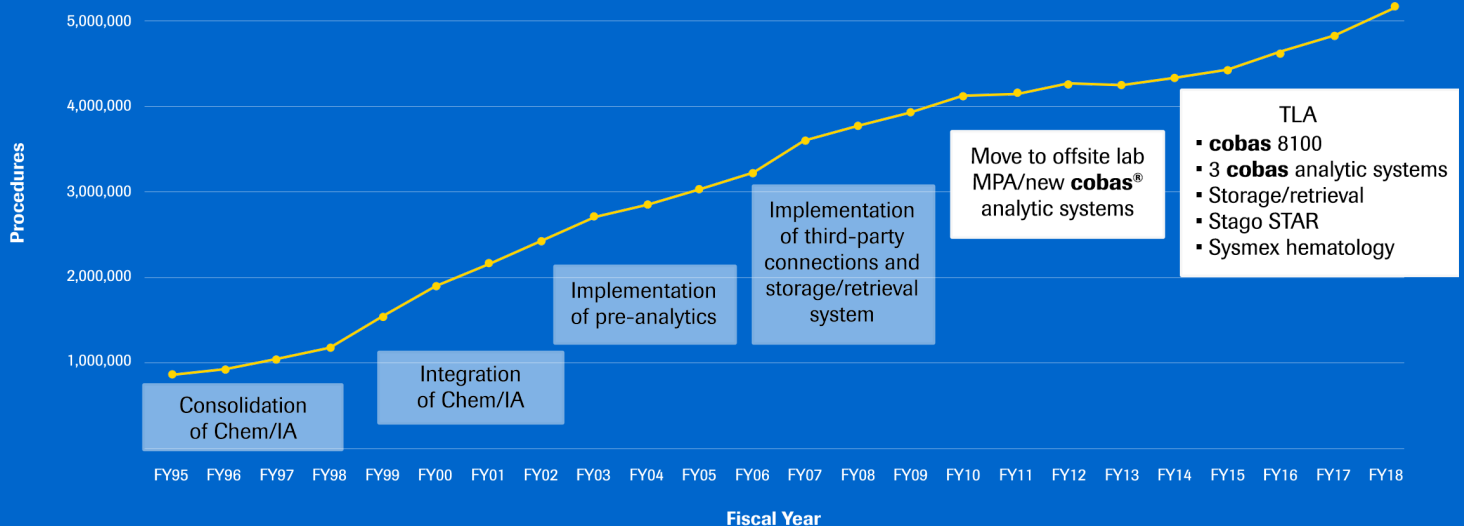
**11,000**  
specimens  
processed  
per day

## Challenges and Opportunities

Huntsville Hospital is grounded in one mission above all else: improving the health of patients. This commitment to first-rate care has helped the hospital receive near-perfect scores in lab evaluations by the College of American Pathology and the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB). As the lab faced rising costs, growing annual billables and other challenges, compromising the quality of patient care was not an option.

Instead, Huntsville Hospital decided to look at its labs holistically and consider how to improve operations. It evaluated how consolidation and standardization could help cut costs while maintaining service. This would enable the hospital to not only continue delivering first-rate care to its own patients, but also expand community outreach by processing more specimens from other local healthcare providers, such as doctors' offices and nursing homes. In essence, Huntsville Hospital would be able to use its lab systems more effectively to provide a larger number of patient test results without increasing costs.

## Huntsville Hospital Laboratory Annual Billables



## Actions

To manage growth and effectively implement the lab transformation, Huntsville Hospital decided to move its lab offsite and invest in automation. Together, Roche and Huntsville Hospital designed and programmed an operational lab concept, applying lean principles and creating a plan around Roche's Total Lab Automation solution.

### To design the new lab, Roche helped Huntsville Hospital:

- Determine the most efficient use of equipment and space
- Optimize work patterns and shared-equipment opportunities
- Consider lab, office and support-space adjacency
- Examine IT and result workflows
- Develop a regulatory, safety and containment strategy

**“As the volumes grow, you either have to add more people to do those tasks or look at technology. We looked at technology.”**

– Vicky McClain, MA, MT  
Administrative Laboratory Director  
Huntsville Hospital

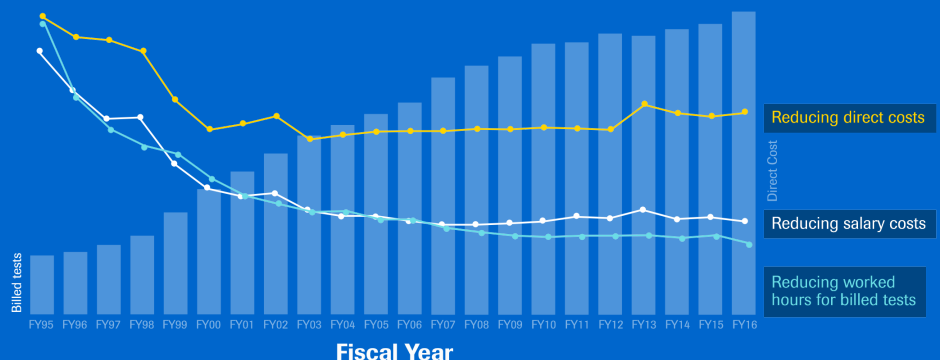
## Results

### Change Made Possible Through Increased Efficiencies

With the help of Roche, Huntsville Hospital effectively managed growth, expanded community outreach and made other notable improvements. Crucially, the hospital was able to transition to its new lab without reducing service quality.

### By transforming its lab, Huntsville Hospital reduced costs and:

- Increased testing capacity without adding more employees
- Reduced send-out test volume to account for less than 5 percent of testing
- Improved employee satisfaction by enabling medical technologists to focus on key samples that require human expertise
- Maintained high quality of care



### The Innovations Continue

The improvements Huntsville Hospital made to its lab enabled the hospital to keep championing life-changing innovations in healthcare. For example, the lab recently upgraded to the new fifth-generation Troponin T assay, which aids in diagnosing acute myocardial infarction, improving patient management and increasing efficiency in both the emergency department and the cardiac unit.

Today, the Huntsville Hospital lab is one of the largest hospital-based labs in the country and performs more than 5 million billable procedures annually. It continues to deliver first-rate patient care and benefit the larger community. Thanks to its lab transformation, Huntsville Hospital is also poised for further growth opportunities.

### CHANGE DRIVERS AT HUNTSVILLE HOSPITAL



**Ruth Ryder, MT**  
*Lead Technologist*

**Vicky McClain, MA, MT**  
*Administrative Laboratory Director*

**PJ Sanford**  
*Laboratory Supervisor  
Preanalytics*

**Robbie McManus,  
MS, MLS(ASCP)CM**  
*Laboratory Supervisor  
Automated Laboratories*

**Sharon Preston, MBA, MT**  
*Senior Manager  
Automated Laboratories*

**Ruby Glover, MT**  
*Lead Technologist*

**Shae Ferguson, MT**  
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