

# Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago Center for Spine, Sports & Occupational Rehabilitation Chicago, IL

*“We are an extremely busy clinic serving a high volume of patients with very specific needs. We have found SpectraSoft to be a cost effective and efficient tool for scheduling. It’s fast and easy to use, and easy to teach new staff.”*

- Staara, Business Support Manager

## Company Description

The Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC) – Center for Spine, Sports & Occupational Rehabilitation is a standalone outpatient clinic that specializes in the treatment of muscular-skeletal conditions. The Center schedules up to 150 patients a day to see a variety of specialists including physiatrists, physical and occupational therapists, an orthotist and a chiropractor.

The Center also conducts several sub-clinics within these specialties, such as an Injection Clinic, an Acupuncture Clinic, a Pelvic Floor Dysfunction Clinic and Orthotic Evaluation. Patients whose medical needs require different treatment modalities are managed separately through these sub-clinics. In short, it is a very busy, fast-paced environment with significant scheduling complexity.

## Situation

The Center opened in 1993 and until about five years ago, used a traditional appointment book for patient scheduling. Patient volume increased each year, and by 1998 it became apparent that a different scheduling system was needed. That year the Center began to search for an automated scheduling solution that met very simple criteria: it had to be as fast as, or faster to use than, “the book.”

Among the options considered was an enterprise-wide scheduling system which was part of a bigger medical information system that had been recently implemented by RIC, the Center’s parent organization. This option was not chosen because it required more information than the Center felt was necessary to book an appointment. Given the patient population that the Center served, a scheduling system had to be fast, easy to negotiate through and require minimum information to get a patient scheduled.

“We found that many of the scheduling programs on the market were awkward and difficult to learn,” commented Business Support Manager, Staara. “The Center did not want to purchase a system that would present a training problem with each new hire.”

## Solution

At some point during their research, the Center learned about a simple, low cost solution from SpectraSoft called Appointments™. It was easy to learn and seemed to fit the Center’s criteria better than anything else they had looked at.

The Center purchased a two-user version of Appointments™ and later upgraded to a 5-user system. Eventually they switched to SpectraSoft’s new AppointmentsPRO™, and are currently operating a ten-user version of AppointmentsPRO 7.0.14.

## Results

“The thing that attracted us to Appointments™ initially is that it has the look and feel of an appointment book,” explained Staara. “This makes it easy to learn, and enables our staff to schedule patients by following visual cues.”

To illustrate her point, Staara said the staff rarely uses the advanced Find Appointment feature because the system’s color-coding indicates the vacant appointment slots. “Instead, they just look at the screen and scroll to the first open time, indicated by a white space. Other coding might show on the screen and be indicative to a type of patient who could only be seen during a particular time slot. Our new staff members can become familiar with the functions and start to schedule appointments in a very short period of time,” she claims.

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## Case Study - SpectraSoft AppointmentsPRO

“I think AppointmentsPRO keeps us much more productive,” said Staara. “The system’s rescheduling function has been especially helpful. For example, when one of our clinicians will be absent for the day, there’s no need to delete and re-enter the information. We just copy and paste the appointments from one provider to another or from one day to another. This makes the scheduling process extremely responsive and adaptable to change – a big improvement over our previous paper-based system.”

The Center also found a way to use the system’s block and hold features to their advantage to reserve specific times during the day for their sub-clinics. “Color coding a “Hold” or “Block” allows us to be sure our specialty clinic patients are scheduled where they need

to be,” said Staara. We identify a unique color for a sub-clinic and then put a “Hold” in that color on the time allotted for the clinic. Once staff are familiar with the color scheme, anyone looking at the screen can tell instantly what type of appointment should be booked in what slot.”

The Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago Center for Spine, Sports & Occupational Rehabilitation continues to use AppointmentsPRO™ because of its flexibility, ease of use and speed. Although it does not interface with the hospital-wide medical information system, the Center has implemented several procedural adaptations or “work-arounds” for information sharing with RIC clinics and departments.

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## About SpectraSoft

SpectraSoft Inc. is a leading developer of Windows-based appointment scheduling and resource management software. SpectraSoft’s signature products, *Appointmentware™*, *AppointmentsPRO™*, and *AppointmentsES™* are installed in more than 3000 facilities nationwide. SpectraSoft’s products have been developed specifically for healthcare and other service oriented industries. For more information and a free demo please contact a sales representative at 1-800-889-0450 or visit our website at [www.ssoft.com](http://www.ssoft.com).