

# ORLANDO BUSINESS JOURNAL

## Accel Research Sites continues 'important global work' and adds jobs as Covid vaccine trials continue

### Strengths

*The health care industry has seen strong economic opportunities for growth due to the pandemic. While some industry segments like hospitals saw revenue decline, other medical businesses were able to establish new markets or grow existing operations. That includes clinical research and trial firms, such as Accel Research Sites, which are helping a number of the large pharmaceutical companies that develop vaccines. Accel Research Sites was one of a few local firms involved in trials. Additionally, as travel returns, Orlando may remain a destination for medical conferences, which will bring more opportunities for local growth.*

[Lora Parahovnik](#) has seen the upside of pandemic growth.

The CEO of Accel Research Sites — a division of Lake Mary-based Accel Clinical Services — had her firm participate in several Covid-19 vaccine studies, including those by Moderna Inc. (Nasdaq: MRNA) and Pfizer Inc. (NYSE: PFE). Accel Research Sites helped recruit and monitor patients as they took part in the vaccine trials.

“It was a great year of doing important global work. I know working 17-hour days with my team in the end of July and beginning of August, when the vaccine trials began in our area, was a huge opportunity to learn and contribute to a tremendous effort.”



That work led to Accel Clinical Services' growth; it went from roughly 60 employees before the pandemic to now 196 companywide. Accel also in June 2020 acquired the assets of Winter Park-based Amplify Clinical for an undisclosed price, which included clinical trial sites in Maitland, St. Petersburg, Tampa and Lakeland.

## WORKING TOGETHER

The company's growth coincides with major collaboration in the health care industry, such as companies working with vaccine providers, and private health systems working together.

This global collaboration was something [Randy Haffner](#) hadn't seen before, said the president and CEO of AdventHealth's Central Florida division during a March 11 briefing.

"It sometimes takes a crisis to move us into this space, but it certainly did that. You no longer worry about what jersey you are wearing versus someone else."

Alliances helped Accel Research Sites, too, which shifted how it operates due to the pandemic, Parahovnik said. That included working with vendors on Centers for Disease Control & Prevention guidelines to conduct safe trials, such as bringing trials to a participant and using virtual platforms like remote monitoring.

"This definitely is something that has changed the rules of the game when it comes to clinical research."

## FUTURE PLANS

Accel is planning for future growth, as well.

The firm has roughly five to eight local positions it plans to fill in the coming months. It's also in talks to add clinical sites in new states, Parahovnik said, though she did not disclose where or how many sites, citing ongoing negotiations.

Orlando has some advantages for the industry, such as the number of patients who can be recruited for trials, Parahovnik said. For a few of the vaccine studies, Accel led in enrolling patients and got a diverse group including first responders and teachers, she said. For now, Parahovnik can look back on her recent accomplishments. For example, her team celebrated when both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines received their Emergency Use Authorizations from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, she said.

"It was a huge relief."

Accel Clinical Services What it does: Health care company with a focus on medical research, including patient recruitment for trials

- Employees: 196 (152 local)
- Founded: 1998
- Headquarters: Lake Mary
- Website: [accelclinical.com](http://accelclinical.com)
- The outlook: The company expects to continue growth, adding jobs and new research sites in coming months.

To view the article, click [here](#).