



The Covid Crisis: One Year Later

*QualDerm's Continuous Leadership and Support Help
Affiliated Practices Thrive Amidst a Global Pandemic*

Early last year, the world came to a grinding halt due to a mysterious, highly-contagious virus. Many businesses, including dermatology practices, were forced to temporarily close, and shelter in place mandates were common across America.

Fortunately, we are beginning to come out on the other side. While the full aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic may not yet be realized, one year later we can analyze how our early and ongoing crisis management efforts have affected the world as we know it today.

A Solid Foundation

Decisions and actions taken at the onset of the pandemic gave QualDerm-affiliated practices a solid foundation on which to operate as the Covid crisis lingered. As federal guidelines and state restrictions evolved, QualDerm's Chief Medical Officer and the Quality Council continued to research and adapt the organizations' safety protocols based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. At the same time, QualDerm's leadership team worked with individual practices to help them adjust to the current environment – bringing back furloughed employees, providing ongoing IT support for the new telehealth platform, and communicating with patients to alleviate fears of in-person appointments.

"It was a streamlined, structured approach to managing the pandemic. I can't imagine what I would have done if not affiliated with QualDerm. I would have had to create everything, and my practice would have had to stay closed even longer," says Christ Ticoras, MD, a QualDerm-affiliated physician who practices at Advanced Dermatology of North Central Ohio in Mansfield, OH. "QualDerm helped me put all the tools in place to reopen confidently and efficiently so we could give our patients safe, effective care."

With the pandemic's early-stage restrictions, patient volume plummeted. Even after practices were allowed to re-open, many patients were still hesitant to schedule in-person appointments. QualDerm developed and executed a patient-focused communications plan to help calm those fears. The organization utilized numerous outlets to reach patients – practice websites, e-newsletters, social media and texts. Throughout the pandemic, QualDerm conducted several network-wide patient surveys to ensure we were meeting the needs of the communities our practices serve. Approximately 7,200 patients responded, and the results were overwhelmingly positive – 97% of patients said our safety precautions met or exceeded their expectations, and 91% said communications regarding our enhanced safety measures were helpful and reassuring. Network-wide, those factors helped bring patient volume back to approximately 95% of pre-Covid rates by the third quarter of 2020.

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– Christ Ticoras, MD
Advanced Dermatology of North Central
Ohio

Large Majority of Patients are Confident in Our Safety Precautions

Throughout the pandemic, QualDerm surveyed patients multiple times to ensure we were meeting their expectations and providing the information they needed to feel safe and comfortable seeking in-person care. In total, approximately 7,200 patients responded, and the feedback was highly positive.

- 97% of patients said our safety precautions meet or exceed their expectations
- 97% of patients believe our staff cares about their health and safety
- 94% have confidence that the practice staff is knowledgeable about and manages the safety procedures well
- 91% found the communications about our enhanced safety measures helpful and reassuring

What Our Patients Had to Say

“The office and staff provided a very safe and clean environment.”

“I enjoyed my visit. The information was helpful, and the attendants were nothing less than great.”

“You are doing a great job with the task of working with people during a pandemic.”

“I’m grateful for our QualDerm partnership and feel really good as we move out of the pandemic,” says Joey Price, MD, a QualDerm-affiliated physician who practices at Tennessee-based Cumberland Skin Surgery and Dermatology. “There has been complete transparency throughout the process between QualDerm and the affiliated physicians. The QualDerm leadership team, the CMO and the Quality Council have led us through this without fail.”

Strength in Numbers

Many independent physicians describe practicing on their own as being on an island. The pandemic exacerbated that notion. In fact, 8% of U.S. physicians chose to permanently close their practices due to pandemic-induced pressure, according to a 2020 Merritt Hawkins survey on Covid-19’s impact on physicians.

“Some of my colleagues who practice independently were devastated – they were ground to a stand still for long periods of time,” says Dr. Ticoras. “I would have been in the same situation without QualDerm. We had the PPE we needed and guidance on safety measures to get our practice opened as quickly as possible. This helped minimize the negative financial impact of being shut down.”

Collaboration is one of the benefits of being part of a larger, quality-driven network. While a shortage of PPE hindered medical practices across the country, QualDerm was able to ensure each of its affiliated practices was stocked with the appropriate supplies. Providers throughout the network also leaned on each other and the QualDerm leadership team to share information and ideas.

“You don’t ever expect to see a pandemic. Everyone put their heads together to make sure we kept safe and were financially stable,” says Dr. Price. “QualDerm partnerships are very much a team approach and I’m proud to be part of this team. We got through the pandemic safely and will continue to grow our practice.”

Once Covid vaccines became available, QualDerm moved quickly to help secure vaccination appointments for all

affiliated practice staff who wanted to get immunized. The CMO's internal weekly Covid communications included the most recent, evidence-based vaccine information to help our employees and practice staffs make the best healthcare decisions for themselves and their families. These communications also helped give our providers the information they needed to answer questions their patients had about the vaccines.

To date, 72% of our QualDerm-affiliated staff members are vaccinated. And, while Covid safety restrictions are rolled back in many areas, we continue to evaluate our safety procedures and follow the CDC guidelines for medical practices to help protect our most vulnerable patients and staff members who cannot be vaccinated.

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Educate and Communicate

Ever-changing safety recommendations and misinformation about the vaccines left many people confused and scared. In keeping with our mission of providing quality care, QualDerm dedicated resources to help educate patients across the entire network with evidence-based information.

“The communications QualDerm developed were a tremendous benefit,” says Dr. Price. “The information was data driven and educational, so it helped our staff and patients understand the decisions that impacted our practice.”

In the early stages of the pandemic, QualDerm developed and distributed customized patient communications for each affiliated practice. Today, the organization continues to regularly communicate with patients regarding our most up-to-date in-office safety protocols. Under the guidance of our CMO, QualDerm also developed a vaccine FAQ that is updated as new information becomes available. These FAQs are included on all of our affiliated practices' websites and have also been shared on the practices' social media profiles and included in e-newsletters.

QualDerm also armed our practice providers and administrative staff with the information they need to answer patient questions and developed talking points they can use to handle patients who are unhappy with our continued mask requirement and other Covid protocols.

“The e-newsletters and patient surveys we very helpful in reassuring patients that our office was a safe environment,” says Dr. Ticoras. “Also, the support and insight from our CMO and the leadership team helped my staff feel much more comfortable that their own health and safety were taken into consideration.”

About QualDerm Partners

QualDerm Partners helps top-tier dermatologists position their practices for sustainable growth and profitability. The company creates market-leading practice partnerships through affiliations and de novo development. QualDerm provides the management support, capital, and guidance for growth. Under QualDerm's True PartnershipSM model, physicians are partners, not employees, and retain their own practice brand. This doctor-driven model is designed to maintain physicians' clinical autonomy and ensure the highest-quality patient care. QualDerm offers physicians tailored partnership structures to meet their needs, as well as the option to sell their practices.

QualDerm currently has affiliated practices in North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, with plans to expand further. For more information, visit www.QualDerm.com.

Contact QualDerm to learn more about partnership opportunities or to discuss selling your practice.

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