



Expanding Patient Access to Dermatology

Recruiting, New Service Lines and Management Support were Keys to Increasing Access to Quality Care in Hickory, North Carolina

Outside Forces Limiting Patient Access

Patient access to dermatological care is becoming increasingly limited. According to Merritt Hawkins' 2017 Survey of Physician Appointment Wait Times, the average wait time for a routine skin exam is at an all-time high – 32 days in major metropolitan areas and 35 days in mid-sized markets. What's more, in many smaller markets, access to advanced care, such as Mohs surgery, is not available at all. For these types of procedures, patients must be referred to other practices which are, oftentimes, located fifty or more miles away.



Source: Merritt Hawkins 2017 Survey of Physician Appointment Wait Times

The demand for dermatological care is outstripping the supply. Numerous factors are contributing to this imbalance.

Thanks to advancements in the treatment of skin conditions, and an increased awareness of skin cancer, more people are seeking care. However, there are fewer dermatologists available to treat these patients. According to a report by Women's Health, the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) estimates 22,000 dermatologists are needed to meet America's demand for dermatology care. However, there are only 10,840 dermatologists practicing today. This problem isn't likely to be solved anytime soon. According to a 2015 report by Merritt Hawkins, less than 500 first year residents and fellows were specializing in dermatology. Further exacerbating the shortage, only 420 residency positions were available to aspiring dermatologists in 2016.

Additionally, increasing government regulations, compliance issues, and complex practice management requirements further reduce patients' access to care. The amount of time physicians spend on administrative tasks has skyrocketed. In fact, a 2016 survey by The Physicians' Foundation found that only 14% of physicians say they have enough time to "provide the highest standards of care." Further, navigating narrowing networks and physician tiering during payor contract negotiations consumes a vast amount of physicians' time.

Recruitment Reduces Wait Time and Expands Services

Since 1992, Hickory Dermatology, a two-physician general dermatology practice, had served patients in Hickory, North Carolina, and the surrounding region.

Over the years, patient demand had steadily increased. More recently, the physicians were being pulled to spend more time on practice management issues such as compliance, payor contract negotiation, and HR. Patients sometimes waited a year or more for an appointment.

Efforts to recruit additional dermatologists had been unsuccessful. The practice owners found it was challenging to find high-caliber dermatologists who wanted to join a small, rural practice. Further, larger practices and health systems lured away the most desirable candidates with higher salaries and more comprehensive benefits packages.

"Before Drs. Marrazzo and Turrentine joined our practice, we had to refer patients away for Mohs surgery and other advanced procedures. It makes me happy to have their talent and skill in our town. They will be the future of good dermatological care in Hickory."

- Richard Salomon, M.D.
*Founding Physician of
Hickory Dermatology*

QualDerm Affiliation Boosts Recruitment and Revenue

In 2015, Hickory Dermatology chose to affiliate with QualDerm Partners. Thanks to QualDerm's wider recruitment network and its ability to provide comprehensive compensation packages, two additional dermatologists were recruited to join the practice. After that, the patient appointment wait times were drastically reduced. Additionally, prior to the QualDerm affiliation, Hickory Dermatology had to refer patients to other practices for many advanced procedures, such as Mohs surgery. However, both of the newly-recruited physicians specialized in procedures that Hickory Dermatology had not previously been able to offer. Keeping these procedures in house improved patient satisfaction and helped the practice nearly triple its total revenue.

“It has been a pleasure to have Dr. Marrazzo and Dr. Turrentine join Hickory Dermatology. The patients truly benefit from having access to the types of care they bring to our practice.”

- Karen Wold, M.D.
Hickory Dermatology

QualDerm Helps Practice Recruit 2 Highly-Trained Physicians

After affiliating with QualDerm Partners, Hickory Dermatology was able to expand its staff to include 2 talented new dermatologists.

Gerardo Marrazzo, M.D.

Specialties: General Dermatology, Mohs Surgery

Education: Emory University School of Medicine

Residency: University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center (Dallas)

Fellowship: Mohs Micrographic Surgery, Cutaneous Oncology and Facial Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery – Zitelli and Brodland Skin Cancer Center (Pittsburgh)

Certifications: Board-certified Dermatologist, Fellow of the American Academy of Dermatology

Jake Turrentine, M.D.

Specialty: General Dermatology

Education: Medical College of Georgia

Internship: Internal Medicine at Baylor University Medical Center (Dallas)

Residency: University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center (Dallas); Chief Resident

Certifications: Board-certified Dermatologist

New Office Adds Examine Rooms and Space for Growth

Over the course of its 20+ years in practice, Hickory Dermatology had outgrown its office space. However, the physician owners did not want to invest in a larger facility, nor did they have the time to manage the process of moving their practice.

Upon affiliation, QualDerm began researching properties in Hickory. Keeping patients’ convenience in mind, a new office space was chosen that was just blocks away from the current practice.

Richard Salomon, M.D., founding physician of Hickory Dermatology, and other staff members worked with QualDerm’s operations team to design the new facility. QualDerm managed the logistics of the new office build out as well as the moving process when the new space was complete.

The new office provided the practice with more than 3,000 additional square feet of space, including 10 general exam rooms and 5 Mohs procedure rooms. This facility gives the practice room for future growth as well.

“We appreciate that QualDerm allowed us all to have significant input into the design of the new facility. However, they took care of all the details – from managing the contractors and purchasing the furniture to notifying patients about our new address.”

- Richard Salomon, M.D.
*Founding Physician of
Hickory Dermatology*

Management Support Improves Compliance While Keeping the Practice's Culture

Managing a physician practice has drastically changed over the years. According to Dr. Salomon, running his practice became too hard once government regulations and managed care got a foothold in the healthcare industry. In this environment, small practices have limited clout in payor contract negotiations and more and more energy must be expended to navigate government incentive and penalty programs, such as EMRs and MACRA. In large part, that's why Dr. Salomon chose to affiliate with QualDerm Partners.

QualDerm leverages its wider provider network to help negotiate better reimbursement rates and to ensure its practices are not shut out of commercial payors' narrowing networks. What's more, QualDerm has a fully-staffed IT department that helps its affiliated practices manage EMR and data reporting requirements. In fact, QualDerm-affiliated practices have been capturing the necessary MACRA data as part of their everyday workflow for over two years. This allows the practices to avoid penalties and increase Medicare Part B reimbursement by up to 4 percent. This data also helps practices improve workflow efficiencies and can be leveraged during payor contract negotiations.

"With QualDerm, the lines of communication are always open. They encourage their partners to give input. Up and down QualDerm's chain of command, there is a desire to have quality practices. They recognize this is not just a business, they recognize there needs to be quality."

- Richard Salomon, M.D.
*Founding Physician of
Hickory Dermatology*

"I'm in frequent communication with the QualDerm team about how to grow and improve my practice. They are very receptive to my ideas. It's been a terrific partnership."

- Gerardo Marrazzo, M.D.
Hickory Dermatology

QualDerm Affiliation Leaves Practice's Culture Intact

Since its founding, Hickory Dermatology's mission had been to always treat patients like family. That culture didn't change after the practice affiliated with QualDerm.

As the practice has grown, QualDerm has helped hire additional staff, including an office manager. According to Dr. Salomon, QualDerm works to ensure the new hires share the practice's vision of providing compassionate, quality care.

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, Ohio, Tennessee and Virginia, with plans to expand into other regions over the next few months. 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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