

HEALTH SYSTEM CASE STUDY

Optimizing International Claims Management

Overview

CLIENT	Multi-state Health System based in the Midwest
KEY CONTACT	Manager, Vendor Management
ORGANIZATION SIZE	93 hospitals, 107 continuing care locations, and 142 urgent care locations across 25 states
START DATE	2022
VENDOR SELECTED	Sunbelt Health Partners (A UHS company)
CHALLENGES	Undeliverable statements and ineffective outreach to international patients, lack of payer engagement with international insurers and TPAs, and limited internal capability to manage contract enforcement or denial appeal

Background

A large, multi-institutional health system operating across 25 states partnered with **Sunbelt International** to address a persistent problem: international patients were routinely misclassified as domestic self-pay, especially in high-volume ER and border-state facilities. This resulted in misrouted balances, undeliverable mail, and thousands of unresolved accounts. The health system's prior vendor had no infrastructure to dial or mail internationally, and lacked the legal or operational expertise to recover from global payers.

Compounding the issue, many international patients had valid insurance or employer-sponsored coverage, but internal teams lacked the necessary contract knowledge and follow-up processes to pursue reimbursement effectively. As a result, denials went unchallenged, collections performance stagnated, and leadership had limited visibility into the root causes or potential solutions.

Challenges

Ineffective International Outreach - The health system's self-pay vendor could not support international dialing or mailing, resulting in thousands of undeliverable statement letters and non-contactable patients.

Contract & Coverage Confusion - Many patients presented with third-party or employer-sponsored international insurance, but the health system was unable to validate or enforce these benefits.

Denials Without Follow-up - The lack of appeals and payer accountability led to avoidable denials going unpaid.

Inconsistent Workflow Across Locations - With over 90 hospitals, there were no standardized practices for identifying, registering, or processing international patients.

Delayed Payments and Financial Impact - Days-to-payment for international claims routinely exceeded 90 days with minimal recovery rates.

Solutions



Technology & Multinational Outreach:

- Implemented a **specialized call dialer** capable of reaching any country, dramatically increasing connect rates
- Mailed international statements with **address formatting** based on country-specific requirements
- Provided **60+ languages** of support via U.S.-based agents trained in cross-border collections



Operational Workflow Optimization:

- Delivered **training to emergency room registrars and front-end access teams** to help flag international status and prevent misclassification at the point of entry
- Built **custom workflows** to route international claims appropriately and separate them from domestic self-pay workflows



Performance Reporting & Strategy:

- Deployed a **comprehensive reporting dashboard** to benchmark claim outcomes across facilities
- Conducted **monthly performance reviews** to analyze trends, review denial root causes, and recommend adjustments

Implementation

Implementation began in early 2022 and was phased across more than 50 of the health system's facilities. The roll-out included:

- **Training:** Emergency room and registration teams were trained on identifying international patients and capturing coverage details at intake.
- **System Integration:** Daily EMR extracts were used to ingest registration and claim-level data.
- **Contract Review:** Sunbelt's legal team audited existing payer arrangements and began pursuing aged receivables with contractual leverage.
- **Business Reviews:** Monthly meetings with the vendor management team to review performance by payer, facility, and region.

Results

Facility	YoY Collection Increase
Facility A (ID facility)	34%
Facility B (NY facility)	25%
Facility C (Northern CA facility)	9%

Key Metrics



Reduction In Days to Pay:

From 90+ days to ~45 days on average.



Additional Revenue Recovered:

~\$4M improvement across included facilities.



Improvement in Recovery Rates

>70% of balances recovered on uncontracted claims.

Ongoing Support and Optimization

Sunbelt currently manages international claims for 53 facilities within the system. Key components of ongoing success include:

- Monthly Root Cause Reviews
- Real-time Claim Status Dashboards
- Annual Benchmarking Across Facilities
- Payer-Specific Escalation & Negotiation Tactics
- Enhanced Patient Satisfaction and Engagement
- Expansion Strategy for New International Market

"Since partnering with Sunbelt, we've seen a notable boost on our international receivables quotient. We are now more confident in our ability to recover payment on international patient balances, especially at our facilities in U.S. border states or in high tourism areas."

**Manager, Vendor Management,
Multi-State Health System**

Summary

This partnership demonstrates how an international claims center of excellence can transform revenue performance. The Sunbelt model is simple and aligned: contingency-success based, performance-driven, and built to integrate.

Schedule your customized international claims assessment today

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