

CASE STUDY

# Highlands Oncology Group Transforms Financial Navigation to Boost Revenue



HIGHLANDS  
ONCOLOGY

TAILORMED

# Background

**Highlands Oncology Group** is a nationally recognized provider of comprehensive cancer care serving nearly 8,000 patients and their families in Northwest Arkansas. The practice's four clinics offer access to advanced treatment options, multidisciplinary cancer teams, and industry-leading clinical studies.

Highlands is a member of the Quality Cancer Care Alliance, the first clinically-integrated network of independent community oncology practices in the United States.

## At a Glance:

### CHALLENGE

Due to manual workflows, the team saw an opportunity to improve financial assistance.

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### SOLUTION

Highlands implemented the TailorMed platform in late 2020 and its tech-enabled support service, TailorMed Complete, in 2023.

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### PHASE 1 RESULTS

**18%**  
revenue increase

**28**  
days to achieve ROI

### PHASE 2 RESULTS

**35%**  
increase in patients assisted

**37%**  
increase in program approvals

**\$1.2M**  
in claimed copay assistance

## CHALLENGE: PHASE 1

# Manual Workflows

Highlands is committed to providing accessible care for the poor and underserved in its community. As part of that commitment, Highlands's experienced financial counselors are responsible for identifying those in need and procuring medication copay assistance for them. The team relied on manual workflows consisting of spreadsheets, sticky notes, and emails to manage an average of 800 enrollments per year. While they operated like a well-oiled machine, they saw opportunity for improvement.

With each clinic seeing about 100 to 150 patients per day for treatment, the counselors had the burdensome tasks of **printing out daily schedules and manually reconciling them to identify patients in financial need** and prepare assistance applications prior to their visits.

## SOLUTION: PHASE 1

# Championing the Need for a Solution

Jeff Hunnicutt, Chief Executive Officer of Highlands, recognized the financial navigation team's impact on improving access to care for patients in need while supporting the organization's financial performance. Discovering the challenge they faced, he championed the need for a solution that could transform how they work and amplify their impact on the practice.

**“Improving financial performance and access to quality cancer care are strategic imperatives for this program. TailorMed helped us achieve these by accelerating our capacity to fund more patients needing financial resources. The spike in revenue generated led to TailorMed paying for itself within a month.”**

**Jeff Hunnicutt**

Chief Executive Officer

## SOLUTION: PHASE 1

# Transforming Financial Navigation Processes

Highlands selected TailorMed to help automate and streamline its financial navigation processes. Staff could now proactively identify patients at risk of not affording care prior to treatment, and quickly enroll them in matching copay card programs. With TailorMed, they were able to jump on every grant opportunity to help their patients.

The team also looked forward to TailorMed's Visit Schedule capabilities, which would enable them to identify patients with out-of-pocket responsibility and prepare their documents earlier. This eliminates manual processes while preventing outstanding balances that require followup.

Implementation and adoption of TailorMed's platform went smoothly thanks to the high-touch onboarding process. One challenge arose: a pharmaceutical manufacturer changed renewal requirements during enrollment season. Having access to TailorMed during this high-volume time really streamlined the process of updating these renewals.

The implementation team also streamlined how each counselor obtains a list of patients visiting their assigned facility. This further enhanced productivity and performance by properly balancing the workload across teammates.

## RESULTS: PHASE 1

# Accelerating Funding Enrollment, Increasing Revenue

After launching TailorMed's platform in December 2020, Highlands increased patient enrollments and increased revenue by 18%. **In the first half of 2021, Highlands increased copay assistance enrollments by 24% compared to the same period in 2020.**

**Investment in TailorMed paid off within 28 days.**

Team productivity also increased, giving counselors more time to follow up on claims and ensure payments were received. This positive momentum continued. In 2022, the counselors assisted **489 patients**, securing **582 approved applications** (up from 66 in 2021).

## CHALLENGE: PHASE 2

# Limited Time and Resources

Despite these strong results, Highlands recognized that technology alone would not enable the cancer center to fully optimize financial navigation. The counselors still struggled with rising patient volumes and increased demands on their time. Their goal was to meet with more new patients, yet this proved challenging given the time they were spending on program enrollments and claims follow-up.

**“Our financial counselors were trying meet with as many patients as possible, but there wasn’t enough time in the day. We needed a solution that would enable our team to focus on the patient, rather than backend processes.”**

**Melissa Fell**

Director, Revenue Cycle

## SOLUTION: PHASE 2

# Scaling Navigation with Expert Support

To combat these challenges, Highlands determined that its financial navigation program required a workforce solution to supplement the technology solution. Leadership decided to invest in TailorMed's tech-enabled support service, **TailorMed Complete**, which provides an expert team of financial navigators.

The support team was comprised of five navigators, **bringing more than 75 years of combined experience** working in health systems, pharmacies, and other settings. One member of the team was assigned as the primary navigator supporting Highlands's seven in-house counselors and patient assistance supervisor.

The Highlands financial counselors began partnering with TailorMed's expert support team in June 2023. Initially, the support team was assigned enrollments and claims processing for the cancer center's Medicare patients. After the first month, the support team took on enrollments and associated claims for both government- and commercially insured patients. The team also began working with billing staff to review all accounts with associated copay assistance programs and ensure claims are properly addressed.



## RESULTS: PHASE 2

# Greater Patient Impact and An Empowered Staff

This seamless collaboration has allowed Highlands's counselors to meet with more patients and provide high-touch financial care, while the support team focuses on backend processes. In 2023, the cancer center:

- Assisted 659 patients (35% increase compared to 2022)
- Secured 800 approved applications (37% increase compared to 2022)

This resulted in **\$1.2 million in claimed copay assistance**. The two-pronged approach of technology and expert support has allowed Highlands to elevate the patient experience. Its counselors are now able to spend more time on patients' individual needs. They are also better positioned to reach out and connect patients with community organizations that provide emotional and financial support.

**“With TailorMed, we can provide a compassionate and higher quality financial navigation experience to more of our patients, which is consistent with who we are as an organization.”**

**Mike Gebhart**

Chief Financial Officer

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### About TailorMed

TailorMed offers the nation's largest network of patients, providers, pharmacies, partners, and life science companies focused on ensuring all patients across all medical conditions can afford treatment. Driven by TailorMed's best-in-class platform, network constituents can proactively identify, match, and enroll patients in financial assistance programs to deliver a world-class patient financial experience while reducing the cost of care delivery and increasing revenues. TailorMed's secure, web-based financial assistance solutions are deployed across more than 1,000 sites of care including Providence Health, UnityPoint Health, Yale-New Haven Health, and Advocate Aurora Health. To learn more, go to [tailormed.co](http://tailormed.co).

### About Highlands Oncology

Highlands Oncology Group is a nationally recognized provider of comprehensive cancer care serving nearly 8,000 patients and their families in Northwest Arkansas. The practice's four clinic locations offer oncology patients access to advanced treatment options, multidisciplinary cancer teams, and industry leading clinical studies. Highlands is a member of the Quality Cancer Care Alliance, the first oncology clinically integrated network in the United States and is composed of 16 practices nationwide. For more information, visit [highlandsoncologygroup.com](http://highlandsoncologygroup.com).

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