

Customer Case Study: Angeles IPA

Angeles Independent Physicians Association (IPA) is one of the fastest growing IPAs in the Los Angeles area, serving the communities of South Gate, Lynwood, Paramount and Downey. Founded in 1995 with 26 shareholders, Angeles IPA has grown to almost 50,000 member physicians, surgeons and practitioners – representing an increase of more than 10,000 lives in the past two years. According to Angeles IPA President Narciso Azurin, M.D., the organization's physicians experience over half a million patients in the Los Angeles area each year. This translates into more than 30,000 claims a month for the IPA's managed care business—a number the IPA simply cannot manage alone.

Angeles IPA Challenges

Prior to 1995, Angeles IPA contracted with a small managed services organization (MSO) staffed by two to three employees. Angeles IPA's claims management and billing was handled via a paper-based system. One computer housed the IPA's electronic files, but none of its systems were integrated. The result was high management costs, increased claims processing times and a higher incidence of errors (which can be caught with automated services). Azurin realized his organization could not grow based on the limitations and inefficiencies of the current system. It was time for a change.

Choosing the Right Partner

In 1995, Azurin made the decision to partner with SynerMed, a Los Angeles-based MSO that could provide Angeles IPA with the comprehensive, integrated support in the areas they needed most: contracting, credentialing and claims, utilization and quality management.

Azurin directly attributes the IPA's tremendous growth in physician members and patient base to the improved quality of service the organization was able to provide after integrating SynerMed's management services into its business strategy.

"The difference was like night and day," said Azurin. "We have a lot more efficiency with SynerMed. They know what our needs are, and they have met all of our expectations. Before, our team was severely limited and had to manually import data. Now, it's all automated and managed by SynerMed."

Angeles IPA's systems are handled centrally through a SynerMed taskforce. A dedicated team of SynerMed representatives, led by James Mason (chief executive officer and chief operating officer), meets with Azurin and his team once a month to ensure that the needs of the IPA are addressed with high quality management services and customized solutions tailored to their particular needs. According to Azurin, the SynerMed team responds to all requests in a timely manner, providing the organization with experience-backed guidelines for better management. This affords the IPA improved physician member benefits, which ultimately results in better patient care.

"I know the workings of other management services companies, and I still rate SynerMed as the number one company for my needs." – Narciso Azurin M.D., Angeles IPA President

Angeles IPA and SynerMed's Long-Term Partnership Results in Greater Physician Benefits and Improved Patient Care

Since partnering with SynerMed in 1995, Angeles IPA has realized significant improvements, including:

- **Provider and patient satisfaction**—With SynerMed's computerized management services speeding specialty requests through to authorization, patient procedures are scheduled more quickly. This allows for increased patient satisfaction, a reduction in complaints received and an overall higher satisfaction level for member physicians. In turn, this satisfaction level allows Angeles IPA to recruit more physicians into its member base.
- **Lower management costs**—With SynerMed, Angeles IPA is able to control costs through the providers in the networks. This includes the renegotiation of contracts and efficient management of the proper coding and medical necessity being used. The results are lower management fees, better utilization management; and better provider, ancillary and vendor contracting - which all leads to increased profitability for the IPA.
- **Easier, more efficient billing**—SynerMed's claims management and financial services allows for a more organized, streamlined way to process claims and expedite payment. Now claims are quickly and securely sent via the Web, directly to SynerMed for processing.
- **Computerized claims management**—EZ Claims - allows for much faster turnaround of claims and procedure authorizations. With the previous paper-based system, specialty services authorizations sometimes took weeks for approval; processing times are reduced to 24-48 hours.

As the health care industry moves toward complete integration of electronic medical records (EMRs), Angeles IPA will look to SynerMed to provide the most cutting-edge, innovative management services solutions.

"We hope SynerMed continues to do the great work they've been doing," said Azurin. "We grew up together, and we work in partnership with them, hand-in-hand. The bigger Angeles IPA grows, the bigger we expect to see SynerMed grow. We look forward to a successful future together."