

Case Study: How the Surgicalist Model Helped a Hospital Increase Local Access to Care and Achieve Level II Trauma Designation



Working with Synergy Health Partners to staff and manage an orthopedic surgery program reversed a decline in patient volume—and helped them level up as a health system.

Problem Overview

A hospital system in the Northeastern part of the U.S. had a problem. Their orthopedic surgery department consistently saw low patient volumes and a high transfer rate outside the system. It was a vicious cycle: their trauma services were inadequate for many of the patients who came to them, which necessitated them transferring patients out of the system for care. This led to lower patient volumes, reduced patient access, and impeded their ability to get the funding they needed to expand and grow their volumes.

Working with Synergy Health Partners, they were able to staff and develop an orthopedic surgery trauma program using the Surgicalist Model. As a result, this hospital was able to significantly grow patient volumes, add another site to their hospital system, and achieve a coveted Level II Trauma Designation according to guidelines set by the American College of Surgeons.

Solution

The hospital leaders partnered with Synergy using the Surgicalist Model, an innovative approach to long-term hospital staffing and management. Surgicalists are experienced surgeons who are dedicated to a hospital facility and who work preset shifts covering trauma surgery call for the facility. Unlike temporary locums physicians, Surgicalists are part of the hospital's team. As a result, they are focused on consistently serving the facility. They collaborate with and support the local private practice doctors, serve on hospital committees, and work side-by-side with hospital administration to grow surgical programs and improve operations.

This specialized model gives the Surgicalist the flexibility to work seven to 10 consecutive days per month, allowing for predictable blocks of time off. This practice model is attractive to skilled surgeons who want a better work-life balance. In parallel, it reduces care conflict for private practice surgeons because they know when they are off, their patients and those needing emergent care are covered with the support of the dedicated Surgicalist team.

The Model creates a virtuous circle in which the hospital and the surgeon achieve their goals. At the same time, local patients benefit from increased access to specialized care in their local community. Here's how the hospital has used a multi-year partnership with Synergy to achieve their growth and staffing goals.





*“40% growth in patient volumes.
Program expansion. Level II
designation. 24/7 coverage.”*

What the System Needed

Hospital leaders contacted Synergy Health Partners because they wanted two things:

1. To increase orthopedic surgery volumes, and
2. Decrease transfers of orthopedic cases out of the system.

A two-year plan was put in place to staff and manage a full-time Surgicalist program that ensured 24-hour availability of orthopedic surgery trauma services for their two existing hospital campuses. This included recruiting, vetting, and deploying a highly skilled surgical staff to handle emergency department coverage, surgery, follow-up, and post-op care.

Year 1

In the first year of the partnership, the Synergy team collaborated with hospital leaders to provide an initial team of three Orthopedic Surgicalist physicians for one hospital campus, that provided 24/7/365 coverage for their department. Synergy sourced, recruited, and onboarded Surgicalists and APPs to build the program and ensure rapid access to care.

Year 2

By the second year of the partnership, the orthopedic surgery program was so successful that the system added a third hospital site. Now, Synergy and the hospital team work together to put in place at least two Surgicalist providers per site for 24/7/365 coverage across all three hospitals.

The Surgicalist model proved its ability to provide predictable staffing; increase surgical volume and market growth, improve patient access; and prevent trauma provider burnout.

Now, however, the hospital leadership had a new goal in mind: Level II Trauma Designation.

Achieving Level II Trauma Designation

A Level II Trauma Center hospital is a medical facility that is equipped and staffed to provide comprehensive emergency medical services to patients suffering from traumatic injuries. Some of the requirements include 24-hour immediate coverage by general surgeons, as well as coverage by the specialties of orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery, anesthesiology, emergency medicine, radiology and critical care.

According to hospital CEOs who have worked with Synergy Health Partners, there are six steps a hospital needs to take in order to achieve a Level II Trauma Designation.

1. Evaluate your hospital's current capabilities and resources. This may involve reviewing your staffing levels, equipment, and facilities to ensure that you have the necessary resources to meet the Level II Trauma Center requirements.
2. Develop a plan. Once you have assessed your current capabilities, you'll need to develop a plan for how to address any gaps or deficiencies in your hospital's trauma care services. This may involve expanding your trauma team, acquiring new equipment or technology, or upgrading your facilities.
3. Seek accreditation. To become a Level II Trauma Center, you will need to seek accreditation from a recognized accrediting organization, such as the American College of Surgeons. This process typically involves a site visit and evaluation of your hospital's trauma care capabilities.
4. Implement changes. Based on your plan and feedback from the accreditation process, you'll need to implement changes to your hospital's trauma care services. This may involve hiring additional staff, acquiring new equipment, or making renovations to your facilities.
5. Train your staff. As you implement changes, it's important to ensure that your staff receives the necessary training to provide high-quality trauma care services. This may involve providing additional training or continuing education opportunities for your trauma team.
6. Monitor and evaluate. Once you have made the transition to a Level II Trauma Center, it's important to monitor and evaluate your hospital's trauma care services to ensure that you continue to meet the requirements for Level II accreditation. This may involve ongoing data collection and analysis to identify areas for improvement and ensure that your trauma team is providing the best possible care to patients.

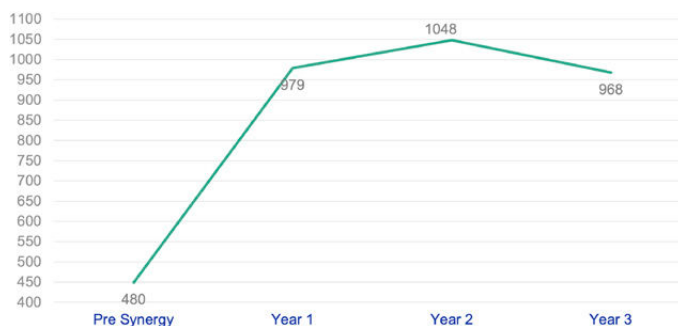
Synergy Health Partners directly supports hospitals with steps 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6—and gives them the resources they need to succeed in every step of the process.

The Results

Synergy and this hospital have now been working together for over eight years. Synergy, has recruited and retained eight full-time and four part-time surgeons, as well as two APPs to support their Orthopedic Surgery Level II Trauma program.

The facility has seen a 40% growth in patient volumes. This increase supported the growth of the entire hospital system, which expanded from two to three sites. Each site now has at least two Surgicalist providers ensuring 24/7/365 coverage.

Patient Surgical Volume



Consistent Surgicalist staffing and management supported Surgical Growth

Year 6

By the sixth year with Synergy, they had reached the staffing volumes, coverage, and capabilities they needed to earn Level II Trauma Center designation.

Summary

In conclusion, the real results of this partnership with Synergy Health Partners demonstrates the true value of a Surgicalist program for any hospital aiming to increase patient volumes, retain cases, expand their system, and achieve a higher level of trauma center designation.

SYNERGY HEALTH PARTNERS SUPPORTS:

1. Predictable staffing
2. Increased Surgical Volume and Market Growth
3. Patient Access
4. Prevention of Surgeon Burnout
5. Level II Trauma Designation

To learn more about Synergy Health Partners and innovative Surgicalist staffing models for hospitals, visit Synergy-HP.com.

