



How does a leading pharmaceutical company become a preferred partner for clinical trial sites and investigators?

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How can overcoming site payment challenges lead to better site-pharma partnerships?

Bayer sought to improve site relationships and drive industry-leading practices

After encountering challenges in its clinical trial site management processes and timeline – from internal inefficiencies to lengthy final study reconciliation time frames – Bayer conducted a comprehensive review of its site management processes and identified site payment improvements as a focus area. When it comes to site-sponsor relationships, payment management has a significant impact on both the partnership and site activity. Recent surveys have found that timely and accurate payments are a key factor in helping sites decide whom to partner with, as slow payment from sponsors and errors in payments cause a significant burden, which can impact operations and overall site satisfaction.^{1, 2, 3} Managing complex invoicing processes, following up with sponsors on payment statuses or reconciling payments all take time that could be better spent recruiting patients and conducting research. Without visibility into when funding will be provided, sites may encounter issues with planning and executing their operations, which may adversely impact the success of clinical trials.⁴

In the US, Bayer identified opportunities to enhance payment efficiency, timeliness and accuracy to strengthen its site relationships, enable better-informed decisions and contribute to its goal of becoming a preferred clinical trial site partner. Downstream, these site payment improvements targeted reducing administrative burdens for both Bayer and its clinical partners, and improving study closeout.

The company sought help from Ernst & Young LLP (EY US) to transform its clinical site invoicing and payment approach.

Bayer focused on addressing three key pain points:

- 1 Reliance on manual processes**
Bayer's current state process required manual – and often duplicative – effort to cross-reference site activities against the original contract and budget.
- 2 Lack of transparency**
Tracking and reporting invoice and payment statuses across multiple data sources caused additional difficulties in achieving payment accuracy and for the clinical sites to quickly reconcile their reimbursements.
- 3 Inconsistency in timely payments**
Overall, the additional time and effort required for the process left Bayer at risk for delayed payment statements. Further, payment statements themselves were often difficult for the clinical sites to understand.

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Partners and patients can count on best practices being used in Bayer-sponsored studies.

Mark Ryan
US Head of Site Management,
Bayer

¹ "What's the fuss with Investigator (Site) Payments in Clinical Trials?" *Octalsoft website*, <https://www.octalsoft.com/investigator-site-payments-in-clinical-trials/>, 17 March 2020.

² "Site Payment Solutions Are Key Differentiators for CROs," *Bioclinica website*, <https://www.bioclinica.com/blog/site-payment-solutions-are-key-differentiators-for-cros/>, 7 February 2019.

³ "Protecting Cash Flow: How Site Investigators and Staff Can Keep Site Payments on Track," *The Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP) website*, <https://acrpnnet.org/2019/03/12/protecting-cash-flow-how-site-investigators-and-staff-can-keep-site-payments-on-track/>, 12 March 2019.

⁴ "Five Key Challenges to Site Payments," *Cloudbyz website*, <https://www.cloudbyz.com/blog/clinical-trial-budget-management/five-key-challenges-to-site-payments/>, 15 July 2019.

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An automated site payment solution that streamlines processes and lowers costs

Bayer Healthcare US and EY US codeveloped and deployed the Automated Site Payments and Invoice Resolution (ASPIREs) program

After an in-depth examination of Bayer's processes and an understanding of future state goals, ASPIREs addressed Bayer's challenges on four fronts:

- 1 Process efficiency:** reduce inefficiencies in Bayer site management and, ultimately, for sites and clinicians in parallel
- 2 Site satisfaction:** enable timely, accurate payments and reduce payment disputes to improve site satisfaction
- 3 Transparency:** provide real-time reporting on invoicing and site payment statuses with increased transparency
- 4 Resource allocation:** utilize third-party services and payment analytics to drive efficiencies through eliminating manual tasks and duplicative efforts

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Innovation that improves the way patients experience clinical trials

Clinical trial sites experience heightened confidence about working with pharma

ASPIREs enabled Bayer and its clinical trial site partners to experience an expedient, streamlined clinical trial process. Among improvements in the US, Bayer's average cycle time for payment to site dropped from 75 days to fewer than 35 days. The company was able to easily make its payment dates and increase the satisfaction of physicians and clinical trial sites. By reducing the administrative burden of payment processes, Bayer was able to continue focusing on driving innovation.

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[The Site payment solution] has been fantastic. The solution ... and training [are] very helpful.

US Clinical Site Directors
Responses to a site satisfaction survey

The results highlight significant ROI in the US, with global data expected soon:

- 75%+** Reduction in number of payment-related questions and disputes
- 80%+** Reduction in number of templates required for reporting and forecasting
- 55%+** Reduction in cycle time for payment to site (payment processing)
- 90%+** Reduction in monthly hours spent supporting payment processes per study, per resource

Automation has driven clear efficiencies and cost savings for Bayer. Ultimately, it is a differentiator in the marketplace that improves Bayer's customer service. As Bayer continues to act on its commitment to become a preferred partner, it enables clinical trial sites to focus on what's most important: driving access to cutting-edge therapies and revitalizing patient care.

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