



Clearway
Health

CASE STUDY

OU HEALTH

Large Academic Medical Center in Oklahoma Rapidly Expands Specialty Pharmacy Program

OU Health, Oklahoma's largest integrated academic health system, built a high-functioning specialty pharmacy program to improve patient access to vital medications.



OVERVIEW

In partnership with The University of Oklahoma, OU Health offers the state's only comprehensive academic health system of hospitals, clinics and centers of excellence focused on delivering evidence-based healthcare.

The academic medical system includes the state's largest physician practice, OU Health Physicians; the state's only freestanding children's hospital, Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health; a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-Designated Cancer Center, OU Health Stephenson Cancer Center; and OU Health University of Oklahoma Medical Center, which serves as the state's only Level 1 trauma center.

In 2021, OU Health launched an expanded specialty pharmacy program in partnership with Clearway Health to improve patient compliance, medication access and adherence. They also sought to decrease provider and staff burden and improve clinical outcomes – all while decreasing costs and reliance on contract pharmacy arrangements.

“We did an RFP, we got a lot of responses and we saw Clearway Health as the winner. We saw them as a health system-oriented company focused not only on the revenues, but also on the clinical component,” said Jigar Thakkar, Chief Administrative Officer – Clinical Support Services, OU Health.

OU Health at a glance*

Integrated academic health system

100+ years in operation

11,000 employees

1,300 physicians

31 staff dedicated to specialty pharmacy in 16 clinics

2,742 patients enrolled in specialty pharmacy program

*As of November 2023





“We really saw it as a no brainer to make specialty pharmacy
a top strategic priority.”

Jigar Thakkar, PharmD, MBA, MHCDS, FACHE

Chief Administrative Officer
Clinical Support Services
OU Health

APPROACH

The decision to bring on Clearway Health to accelerate the specialty pharmacy program at OU Health was made by vital members across the entire health system. Executives were highly engaged and chose to involve the Board of Directors early in the process. Because of the health system's ties to the University of Oklahoma, the university provost was also a key decision maker — as was the facilities group, ambulatory leadership, providers and other key staff.

Early goals of the specialty pharmacy program at OU Health included:

- Rolling out a clinic liaison model to support pediatric specialty clinics

- Establishing a Medication Therapy Management clinic to support the physician's group at OUPB (OU physicians building)

- Providing clinic pharmacy support for the fertility clinic

- Targeting inventory savings, leakage, revenue capture and optimization with new FTE support

- Centralize pharmacy services amid health system mergers

- Gain pricing benefits of 340B program for Ryan White clinic

"The FDA was approving specialty drugs at a much more rapid pace. For our health system, we really saw it as an obligation to our patient population. We needed to have a specialty pharmacy program that's comprehensive because patients are actually getting these medications; our providers are writing for these medications and our clinic staff is dealing with them."



Jigar Thakkar, PharmD, MBA,
MHCDS, FACHE
Chief Administrative Officer
Clinical Support Services
OU Health



OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

The specialty pharmacy program at OU Health includes the following operational improvements:

Embedded specialty pharmacy staff: the Clearway Health pharmacy team is embedded in OU Health's facilities and works alongside providers and care teams to support patients, and provide administrative and counseling functions

Operational reporting: automatic data-fed dashboards to ensure enrollment and retention of patients; allows near real-time insight to allocate staff appropriately and pivot strategies

Closed-loop inventory process: practicing "just in time" ordering to avoid margin discrepancies; led by inventory liaison, allowing for easier data verification and accurate reflection of inventory growth

Financial reporting: utilizing a pharmacy P&L cost management methodology, the system provides an accurate view to forecast revenue

Scalable Specialty Pharmacy Expertise

Clearway Health elevated OU Health's strategic growth by:

Sustaining and growing the specialty pharmacy program while OU Health expanded pharmacy footprints on campus and with other health system partners

Establishing the specialty pharmacy strategy and medical therapy management (MTM) clinics while OU Health achieved 340B eligibility in the pediatric clinics, adult specialty clinics and the Children's Hospital - then expanded services into new 340B eligible areas with rapid ramp up and growth

Increasing access to Limited Distribution Drugs (LDDs) to lower the cost of care to the patient, decrease leakage and increase market share



OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

(Continued)

Expanded Clinical Services

In addition to significant operational and financial changes, OUHealth has realized clinical program improvements through the specialty pharmacy program:

Opened access to medications that were previously inaccessible

Launched Hepatitis C clinic and screening program

Created Comprehensive Cystic Fibrosis program to improve medication access and remove the barriers of polypharmacy

Introduced specialty pharmacy services to serve the HIV patient population

Supplemented oral oncolytic program

Created services for patients of the Reproductive Health Clinic

Currently piloting patient-reported outcomes research (data collection and reporting) program with select conditions (HIV, Hepatitis C, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Migraine and Multiple Sclerosis)

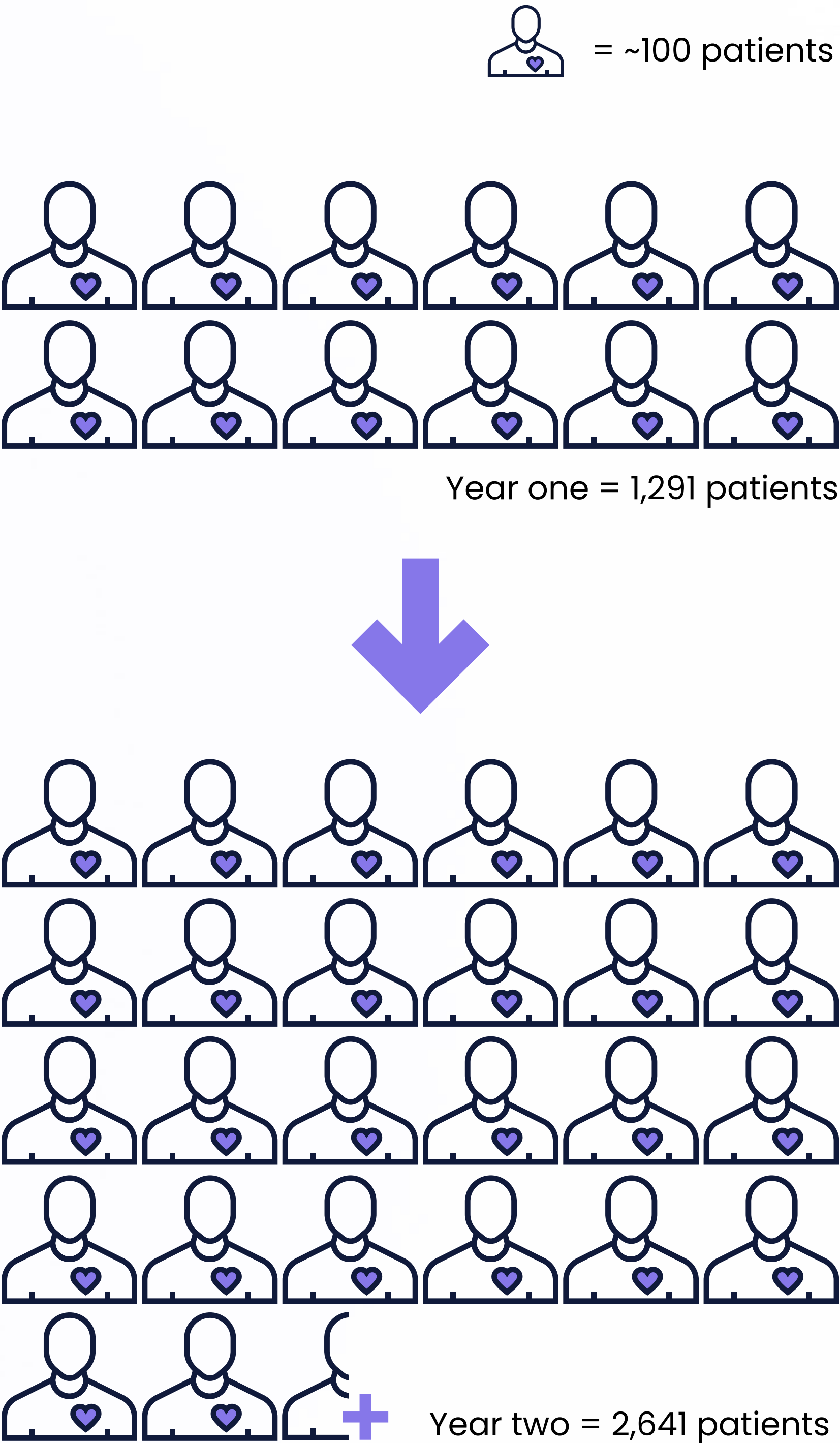


RESULTS

Clinical and patient outcomes

Patient enrollment in the specialty pharmacy program has been very successful at OU Health, with 1,291 patients enrolled in the first year. The program now includes more than 2,742 patients.

The impact of specialty pharmacy program enrollments are far-reaching and positively affect patient loyalty to the health system. A positive specialty pharmacy experience helps reduce patient leakage, ensuring more positive clinical outcomes and value to the health system.



**Data as of November 2023*



RESULTS

Clinical and patient outcomes

The Clearway Health specialty pharmacy team has especially impacted the system's Reproductive clinic. The medications needed for these patients can be expensive and aren't always adequately covered by health plans. The team was able to overcome these obstacles to help fertility patients save \$410,205 in a five-month period.

The patient savings were accomplished by:

- Utilizing lower 340B medication pricing and patient discount plans

- Reducing reliance on an outside specialty fertility pharmacy

- Working with the patient's health plan to ensure prior authorization and approval

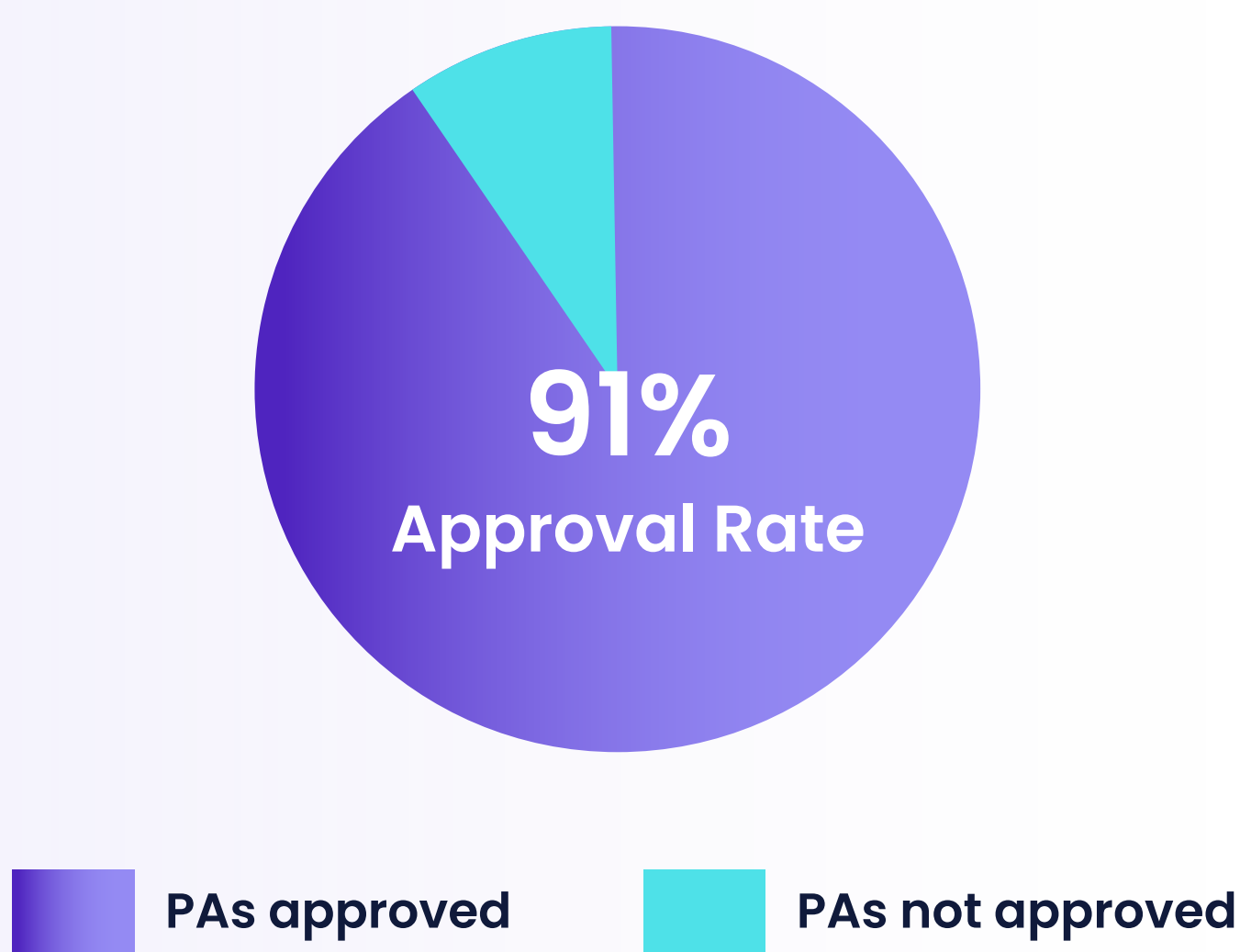


RESULTS

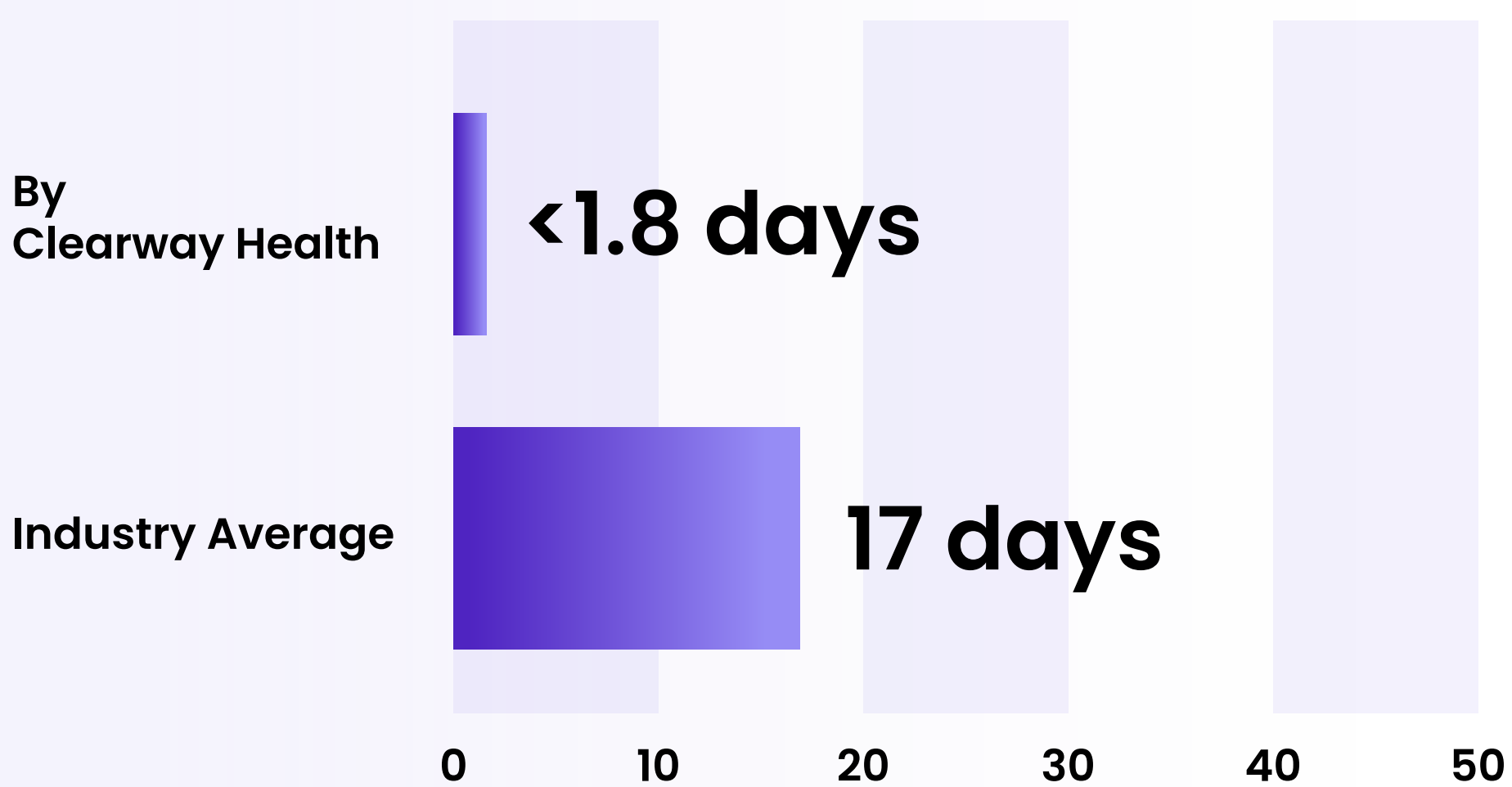
Clinical and patient outcomes

Clearway Health Pharmacy Patient Liaisons at OU Health work with patient health plans to ensure prior authorizations (PAs) are in place and the patient wait time to receive their medications is minimized. Seeking these approvals can require several phone calls, emails, and faxes.

9,578 PAs submitted in FY22



Prior Authorization Turnaround Time



FINANCIAL IMPROVEMENTS

In two years, Clearway Health has created a specialty pharmacy program that has served **4,524 patients** and delivered more than **\$288 million in revenue** to OU Health.

“The growth certainly wasn’t linear. It was exponential – the transition from a cost center point of view to one that generates revenue and contributes margin back into the system,” said Thakkar.

Pharmacist and provider satisfaction

The specialty pharmacy program at OU Health has contributed to provider satisfaction. This is evident in the Net Promoter Score of 91 measured in a recent provider survey. Provider comments indicate that the pharmacy team members from Clearway Health are helping not only their patients but the providers and staff with their workloads:

“Our pharmacy team has been an excellent addition to the clinic. They have improved the patient experience immensely.”

“Having the liaisons in our office has made a huge difference for our nursing staff and patients as far as the experience of getting specialty medications. I don’t know how we did it before.”

“The liaisons are the link we didn’t know we were missing. Can’t imagine ever going back to not having them.”

In addition, the impact of the specialty pharmacy program at OU Health has led to pharmacy leaders having a more pronounced seat at strategic planning tables.

“We’ve done a great job here at OU Health tracking the value the specialty pharmacy program is providing,” said Thakkar. “For example, we outlined in our monthly dashboard what impact the clinic-embedded pharmacy team members are having on the HCAHPS questions.”

Overall, the specialty pharmacy program at OU Health has turned the system's pharmacy program from a cost center to a revenue center, with an emphasis on enhanced patient care. **With smart investments, a focus on elevating pharmacy leadership’s role in strategic planning and enhanced relationships with ambulatory providers, the specialty pharmacy program has created an asset for the health system and value for the community.**



Specialty Pharmacy Partner

Clearway Health was born out of Boston Medical Center Health System. They partner with hospitals and health systems to build or strengthen their own specialty pharmacy programs, improve access to care and provide personalized support to vulnerable patients, families, providers and care managers to eliminate barriers and ensure medications are received on time. The partnership with OU Health is a successful collaboration that has far exceeded expectations.



Nicole Faucher, MS
President, Clearway Health

“The secret is building a team who believe in the work they do and want to create an exceptional patient experience. Healthcare can be full of sludge. There is so much that slows us down and is created by unnecessary hoops and obstacles. Removing barriers or access to care has always been best resolved by people advocating and acting on patients’ behalf – to get their medications, help them achieve adherence and make it as easy as possible to do it.”





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