

CASE STUDY

# Taking Care of a Community Requires Clinical & Digital Technology Strength



## THE CHALLENGE

Wayne Memorial Hospital cares for their rural community, and leadership wanted to do more to help those in need. With almost 18% of their county's population in poverty and without insurance, many struggled to afford medical care. Leadership's instincts were right as COVID-19 escalated the need for all patients, especially those without insurance, underinsured with high deductible plans or those who lost their medical insurance.

Wayne Memorial's Financial Assistance Program was put in place to provide funding for those patients. A small staff worked on patient cases, calling foundations and other philanthropic programs for funds to cover eligible patients' costs, but did this on a per-person basis. They needed help scaling to care for many more patients. This presented a challenge that required staff, extensive search capabilities, tedious enrollment form completion and seemingly continuous follow-up.

“ Rural hospitals have unique challenges, but we constantly look ahead to raise the bar on what we can do for our community. Expanding access to more affordable care is a priority, and Atlas Health's total solution delivered so that we can care for more patients in need.

— Greg Jones, Chief Financial Officer,  
Wayne Memorial Hospital





45 patients receive financial aid support in first 12 months of Atlas Health partnership



\$1 million in financial aid support secured in 2021 to help reduce financial burdens for patients



5x increase in financial aid funds helps maintain financial sustainability for Wayne Memorial Hospital

Wayne Memorial Hospital wanted a partner that could deliver an end-to-end solution that would fill the gap in their existing medical financial aid reimbursement strategy and offer a holistic approach to managing medical financial aid across their organization. Across different practice areas and teams, Wayne Memorial Hospital needed to address several challenges:

- Revenue leakage due to manual processes and inefficient medical financial aid management
- Inability to tap into the 20,000+ available financial aid programs due to the lack of uniformity across health system processes
- While their commitment to providing care with compassion, courtesy, and integrity includes a robust charity care program that supports patients in need, the hospital faced escalating numbers of unreimbursed costs for care delivered.

“ **Financial aid is a vital part of any provider’s care strategy but especially in a community where many are under-insured/uninsured, and COVID-19 effects continue.** — Dr. Asit Jha, Medical Director and Oncologist, Jesup Oncology Center

“ **We are delighted with the expanded philanthropic funds and free drugs programs received. We have patients who may not have proceeded with or abandoned ongoing therapies had it not been for this greatly expanded financial assistance provided to our patients.** — Greg Jones, Chief Financial Officer, Wayne Memorial Hospital

Wayne Memorial Hospital, whose mission is to provide high-quality health care services to all patients, built a state-of-the-art facility with 84 beds in 2007 to serve the rural population in Wayne County, GA. Additionally, the hospital partners with other regional providers to offer oncology infusion services at the Lewis Cancer & Research Pavilion. As the third-largest employer in Wayne County (a population of 30,000) with 500 employees, Wayne Memorial won the Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals Small Hospital of the Year Award in 2010, 2015 and 2019.

## THE SOLUTION: ATLAS HEALTH

Wayne Memorial Hospital chose Atlas Health as an active partner to deliver an end-to-end financial aid solution that could be implemented easily and quickly – with no capital investment, resources or personnel required. Atlas' proprietary AI-powered technology and its culture of responsive innovation enabled Wayne Memorial Hospital to move beyond paper-based approaches. A digital automation approach was implemented to ensure all medical financial aid programs are evaluated to help patients access and afford care.

To fill all coverage gaps and ensure no patient is left behind or reimbursement opportunity missed, Wayne Memorial Hospital adopted a holistic approach. The hospital has partnered with Atlas to predict the optimal eligible coverage options based on historical EMR data and the results of a simple questionnaire administered at registration.

Determining the right financial plan for each patient at registration enables efficient routing of tasks and automation across a wide variety of financial counselors, financial navigators, patient assistance coordinators and customer service representatives.

“**Reducing the patient's stress associated with their care is extremely important to Wayne Memorial.**

— Kate Nichols,  
Financial Navigator,  
Grant Project Manager,  
Wayne Memorial Hospital



### Key Market Trends Fuel Need for Financial Aid Since 2000

Hospitals of all types have provided more than \$660 billion in uncompensated care to their underinsured and uninsured patients, including uncompensated costs for drugs and medical devices. Resources are available to fund these services, with over \$30B across more than 20,000 medical financial aid programs, and the need is more vital than ever. An estimated 29% of Americans lost their health insurance in 2020, and even with insurance, 51% percent of the workforce are enrolled in high deductible health plans. Yet, most don't have \$500 in readily available cash to pay for unexpected medical costs. In addition, a recent study shows financial stress is associated with worse treatment outcomes in people with head and neck cancer and other life-threatening illnesses.

## THE RESULTS

In less than a year, Wayne Memorial Hospital helped more than 45 patients afford care with medical aid support. Wayne Memorial Hospital is now on track to support their patients with more than \$1 million in 2021, an increase of more than 5x, helping to reduce financial burdens for patients and maintaining financial sustainability for the health system.

In a small community, provider and patient overlap are common, and it takes on a new meaning and significance for the care team. Beth Heape, Pharmacist at Wayne Memorial Hospital, said, "We often care for patients who are friends, neighbors, or relatives of our staff members. It's personal."



## A Financial Plan for Every Patient

Advanced technology to complete digital and pre-populated financial applications – and digital communications to secure patient authorization and information – have contributed to a 75% reduction in the time it takes to submit a clean claim and a 50% reduction in time to submit a philanthropic aid application. These improvements mean Wayne Memorial Hospital's financial counselors can help more patients and secure more reimbursements with a more efficient process. Wayne Memorial Hospital's results demonstrate how partnering with Atlas reduces uncompensated care, increases patient satisfaction and referrals and improves reputation in the community, operating margins and higher levels of compliance.

### ABOUT ATLAS

Atlas Health automates philanthropic aid to improve access, affordability, outcomes and health equity for vulnerable populations. Through intelligent matching and enrollment to 20,000 philanthropic aid programs, healthcare organizations can improve patient outcomes and reputation, increase cash and reduce staff administrative burden. Learn more at [Atlas.Health](https://atlas.health).

I. ValuePenguin

II. 51% of US Workforce Enrolled in High-Deductible Health Plans, Which May Leave some Underinsured", ValuePenguin Study, January 25, 2021.

III. "63% of Americans Don't Have Enough savings to Cover a \$500 Emergency", Forbes, January 6, 2016.

IV. "Financial Toxicity Increases Cancer Death Risk," Cancer Health, March 22, 2021.



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