

# Case Study



## NorthStar Anesthesia's Journey to Improving Upfront Patient Collections

NorthStar Anesthesia, headquartered in Irving, Texas, was founded by anesthesiologists in 2004. As a leading national provider of anesthesia care, NorthStar serves hundreds of hospitals, ASCs, and academic centers, with a reputation for clinical and operational excellence centered on establishing standardized practices and innovation.

NorthStar shares challenges that most anesthesia providers face, including patient collections and seeking timely access to accurate patient information pre- and post-service. Recognizing that patient responsibility will continue to increase as a percentage of revenue, NorthStar sought a solution that would allow them to educate patients about their anesthesia responsibility and then collect that amount pre-service. Additionally, NorthStar wanted a partner who could provide verified patient demographic and procedure data prior to service.

NorthStar was looking for a multi-pronged approach that would:

- integrate pre-service patient data into their scheduling, clinical and financial systems;
- verify the patient's insurance coverage and estimate patient responsibility;
- engage with the patient to educate them regarding their anesthesia care and financial responsibility; and,
- facilitate payment options that met the patient's needs.

NorthStar evaluated different options and selected HST Clariti from HST Pathways to implement standardized practices nationwide for data, patient estimation, and patient pre-service engagement. HST Clariti surpassed competitive offerings with its autonomous process that required minimal staff oversight, its capability to produce estimates for 100% of anesthesia patients with 98% accuracy, and the consultative patient engagement services.

“HST Pathways’ established leadership in the ASC market and years of experience in patient estimation gave us the confidence to go with the market leader.”

Bob Richthammer, V.P. of Revenue Management for Northstar, leads NorthStar's revenue optimization process and the national rollout of HST's Clariti solution to Northstar's 200+ service locations. "Recognizing the need to drive financial improvement for Northstar on behalf of our investors and our surgical clients, as well as the need to improve patient education and compliance with evolving fair billing laws, we selected HST Clariti as our go-forward solution. HST Clariti passed all the tests for accuracy, engagement, and performance that we established," according to Richthammer. "HST's established leadership in the ASC market and years of experience in patient estimation gave us the confidence to go with the market leader." NorthStar selected the Medical Center Endoscopy (MCE) of Houston for the initial implementation. MCE is a Surgery Partners affiliate and performs more than 1,200 cases per month.

Post implementation, the results are impressive and even surpassed HST's national averages for financial improvement and patient engagement. Leveraging HST Clariti, 89% of patients with an expected financial responsibility were contacted pre-service, with 38.5% of those patients making a payment in full. Overall, 56% of patient responsibility was collected in advance of care. **Based on yearly comparisons, Northstar has been able to improve patient collections for month of service by 96% and improved the average days to payment for patient balance after insurance by 94 days.**

NorthStar opted to use HST's Patient Engagement Center to proactively reach out to patients with a financial responsibility. The call is instrumental in improving brand awareness for NorthStar, educating patients about their anesthesia estimate, and providing customer service support, taking that burden off surgeons' offices and facility staff. The cadence of calls and electronic communications are coordinated with facility outreach. The response from patients has been overwhelmingly positive, adding to the secondary benefit of improving patient satisfaction scores. When called, patients frequently responded like these NorthStar patients, "It's actually pretty easy. It's very self-explanatory.", "I really appreciate your service, reaching out like this. It's very helpful.", and "Thank you very much. I appreciate the call."

According to Richthammer, "What's most impactful is that the HST Clariti product works autonomously, not requiring time by our staff or our RCM partner, Arietis, to manage the verification and estimation process. Also, we can provide the surgeon groups and facility staff with a toll-free number to HST's Patient Engagement Center for questions." HST closes the loop by sending patient and payment information to Arietis. The electronic feed improves accuracy and reduces costs. Data shows that informed patients are more likely to pay any remaining responsibility post-adjudication.

According to Trish Corey, HST's VP of Connected Care, "NorthStar's commitment to standardized processes is helping us scale implementations quickly. Working with their I.T. and business operations teams, we have identified the initial wave of target sites and established an implementation schedule. Compliance with the No Surprises Act and state level fair billing laws is top of mind as we continue to work with NorthStar to ensure full compliance with what's ahead."