WHITE PAPER

Enhancing Global Clinical Trials: The Impact of Travel Concierge Services on Patient Recruitment, Retention, and Compliance

Ensuring Seamless Study Visits: Helping Patients Navigate Travel and Country-Specific Regulations

UBC

In a globalized clinical research landscape, trial sponsors face mounting challenges related to patient recruitment, retention, and protocol compliance. Engaging with potential clinical study patients is becoming more complex with logistical hurdles such as long-distance travel, visa requirements, and adherence to country-specific regulations creating significant barriers. Additionally, the new Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) diversity draft guidance, will require additional strategies for supporting patient populations who do not live close to clinical research sites.

For patients, traveling to participate in a clinical research study is also becoming more of a challenge. The 2023 "Perceptions & Insights Study" by The Center for Information and Study on Clinical Research Participation (CISCRP), noted that the burden of clinical travel rose from 29% in 2019 to 44% in 2021.[1] The survey confirmed that travel to a study site is still the most disruptive part of clinical study participation for patients. The complexity of traveling to and from study sites is a deciding factor in whether they will participate.

The Problem: Travel as a Barrier to Participation

Studies show that approximately 30% of potential participants decline to join studies because of travel-related concerns, including long distances, lack of adequate transportation, and high personal costs.[2] Additionally, for studies conducted across multiple countries, participants must often navigate a web of visa regulations, medical documentation, and quarantine protocols, further complicating their involvement.

Travelling to clinical research centers is often burdensome and time consuming for patients and caregivers, regardless of the medical condition. Several factors contribute to this experience, including:

- Depending on others for transportation
- Potential physical barriers
- Reliable transportation
- Long distances to a study site
- Intensive study visit schedules
- Busy life/work/school schedule

Studies involving rare diseases, pediatric populations, or remote regions where accessibility is often limited, make these barriers especially challenging.

The Solution: Patient Transportation and Expense Reimbursement Services

UBC's Concierge Patient Transportation and Expense Reimbursement Services offer a comprehensive solution to these challenges. By managing every aspect of travel coordination and expense reimbursement processing, we alleviate the burden of participation to ensure transportation and financial constraints do not deter participation. For sponsors, these services help ensure timely patient participation, better retention, and improved protocol adherence.

Benefits of UBC's Transportation and Expense Reimbursement Services

THE NEED

- For patients who rely on others for transportation
- For patients who have busy schedules
- For patients who may have trouble with mobility
- For intensive study visit schedules
- For long distances to study sites
- For rare disease patients who may be widely dispersed
- For patients to complete study participation

THE BENEFITS

- Captures patients who might not otherwise enroll
- Encourages compliance with study visits
- Eases burden on sites and patients
- Is flexible and available in all countries included in the study
- Provides all modes of transportation and accommodation
- Has a dedicated travel vendor who works directly with sites (multi-lingual assistance 24/7/365)
- Allows patients to focus on their participation and well-being
- Provides patients greater access to healthcare and support

THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD OF PATIENT TRAVEL

The clinical research community is focusing on alleviating patient burden and enhancing satisfaction for participants. Sponsors are incorporating transportation and reimbursement support as part of their studies to make it easier and more convenient for participation.

Not only does this benefit patients and caregivers, but it can also reduce dropout rates by up to 30%, helping to avoid the thousands of dollars typically associated with recruiting and onboarding replacement patients.[3]

In a recent Elligo Health webinar poll, 83% of respondents said that patient travel has affected retention in their trials. Retention rates improve for studies when travel services are implemented. In particular, studies for patients with rare diseases, or trials that are attempting to reach patients across a wide geographic area are able to see an increase in patient retention for their studies.[4]

STRATEGIES TO CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE, PATIENT-FOCUSED TRANSPORTATION AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

- Anticipate and plan for patient and caregiver needs: Engage with advocacy groups and/or community groups to understand patient and caregiver concerns
- Offer flexible options to support all patients, including:
    - Private and ambulatory supported transportation
    - Domestic and international flights
    - Hotel accommodations
    - Meals
    - Childcare, elder care
    - Travel coverage for caregivers
    - Preloaded debit cards for travel costs & incidentals
    - Reimbursement of expenses incurred to travel to study sites
- Offer 24-hour travel service support
- Survey patients and caregivers throughout the study to obtain feedback in areas for improvement

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A TRAVEL AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT PARTNER

- Global experience. Regulations and data privacy laws are constantly evolving. A good partner will be educated and informed on the current landscape.
- Depth. Providing a full range of services, including:
    - Travel coordination and support
    - Reservations
    - Reimbursement
    - Itinerary or visit reminders
    - 24-hour travel service support
    - Regular reporting on transportation and reimbursement expenses and metrics
- Flexibility and experience coordinating travel during emergencies (pandemic, extreme weather, medical emergencies, government unrest)
- Empathetic and committed to patient excellence

REGULATORY GUIDANCE

In order to make travel services seamless for sites and patients, and to ensure patient data is protected, specific nuances and restrictions by country must be followed. Investigational Review Board (IRB) or European Commission (EC) approval needs to be obtained first followed by a signed consent by patients.

In the US, the FDA does not consider reimbursement for travel expenses to and from the clinical study site and associated costs such as airfare, parking, and lodging to raise issues regarding undue influence, provided that the payment amount is not so much that it may create an undue influence.[5] Other countries vary in their restrictions and requirements. As these regulations are continually evolving, it is critical to engage with an experienced partner who understands issues across borders.

Travel Support Services for Smart Business

Travel concierge services are increasingly vital to the success of clinical trials, especially in global clinical trials. These services alleviate the logistical burdens patients face, such as long-distance travel, visa requirements, and compliance with country-specific regulations. Additionally, these services play a critical role in addressing disparities in study participation, particularly for minority communities. By managing transportation, accommodations, and reimbursement, travel concierge services streamline the patient journey, improving retention and compliance. This not only enhances patient experience but also boosts trial efficiency, ensuring more reliable data collection and quicker completion of studies.
By removing barriers such as transportation challenges, travel costs, and logistical complexities, concierge services ensure that all patients have equitable access to study opportunities. This diversifies the patient pool and enhances the overall validity of clinical data. As trials become more global, concierge services help maintain inclusivity, especially for diverse and underrepresented populations, ultimately improving trial outcomes.

About UBC

United BioSource LLC (UBC) is the leading provider of evidence development solutions with an expertise in global clinical trial transportation and reimbursement support. UBC helps biopharma mitigate risk, address product hurdles, and demonstrate safety, efficacy, and value under real-world conditions. Bringing over 30 years of experience, UBC is uniquely positioned to support global transportation and reimbursement support for clinical trials.

To learn more about how UBC can support your clinical trial with concierge transportation and reimbursement support, reach out to us at contact@ubc.com.

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Data Privacy Legislative Requirements: As a global organization, UBC complies with applicable data privacy laws and regulations, including data localization laws, where it conducts business and Processes Personal Data. Data protection requirements vary widely from jurisdiction-to-jurisdiction. Additionally, in the area of clinical trials, it is imperative to comply with the specific legal requirements unique to each country. As such, UBC has adopted its Framework to ensure appropriate compliance with applicable data privacy and security requirements and maintain a common standard that adequately protects UBC and applicable Personal Data. In accordance with this approach, UBC strives to adhere to applicable laws.

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