White Paper

The Secret Sauce in Successful Clinical Trial Payments Programs

Hint: It's Not the Software

JACKIE TORRES, Associate Director, Site Solutions, Clinical Trial Payments, IQVIA Technologies
JASON FANELLI, Manager, Site Solutions, Clinical Trial Payments, IQVIA Technologies

IQVIA TECHNOLOGIES

Table of contents

Introduction

On the surface, making payments to investigators for running clinical trials sounds easy. Why isn't the process simply handled by a pharmaceutical company's Accounts Payable department, similar to how other vendors are paid?

The primary reason is that relationships between pharmaceutical sponsors of clinical trials and the investigators that perform the trials are highly regulated and require the utmost in transparency. Every payment must be justified as an accomplishment defined in the Clinical Trial Agreement (CTA) between sponsor and site.

If it still sounds as though QuickBooks or SAP can handle the site payments process, then consider that every trial brings a unique combination of sponsor-site relationships, protocol requirements, and clinical technologies to trigger payments. Additionally, each country has its own set of regulations and requirements to govern clinical trials and how investigators get paid.

Thus, the capability for sponsors to pay sites consistently in the promised timeframe, as well as provide transparency throughout the process so sites know exactly what they are getting paid for and when, is lacking throughout the industry. This sentiment has been captured year after year in various surveys of investigators and site personnel.

Many clinical technology companies offer specialized software solutions to help manage several components of the site payments process; however, these systems still require a large effort by the sponsor to operate. Outside of the US and Canada, paying sites is filled with challenges and nuances that even focused software and integrated technology platforms cannot solve alone.

"More than 80% of sites want 30-day payment schedules"

— Society for Clinical Research Sites (SCRS) annual site landscape survey, October 2020

What is the secret sauce that makes a global clinical trial payments solution palatable to all stakeholders around the world?

IQVIA Technologies has been perfecting its recipe for success as a third-party, technology-enabled service provider for more than a decade. Our purpose-built platform houses the most robust and pressure-tested site payments software in the world. Nevertheless, software with standard customer support is not enough to solve for all the complexities in site payments; a targeted, two-pronged approach is essential. Support for sponsors – the customer of our Clinical Trial Payments solution - and support for sites – a key end user of the solution – must be handled distinctly.

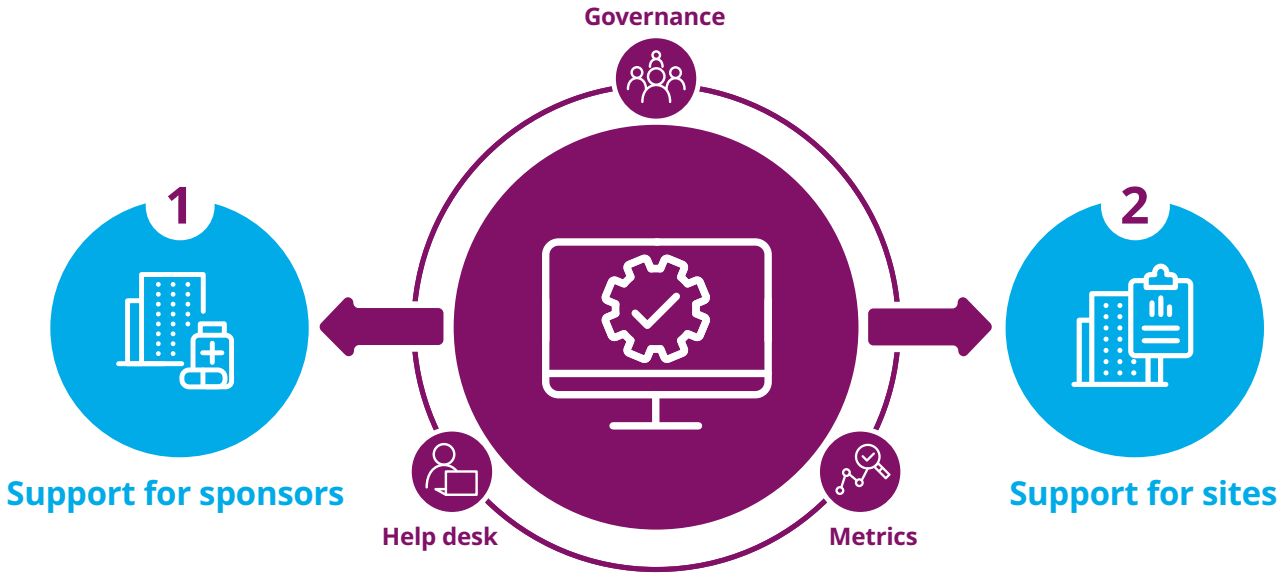
Creating separate support organizations, one dedicated to sponsors and the other dedicated to sites, elevates customer satisfaction within both entities. With an intense focus on continuous improvement in global site payments, both support teams help identify and evaluate stumbling blocks to a smooth process, particularly in challenging countries.

Figure 1: Continuous improvement in global site payments

From there, repeatable, trackable, automated solutions are developed, tested, and rolled out across our portfolio of sponsors and sites. It's a role we can uniquely play as we pay sites across studies, independent of our CRO services.

With this two-pronged model, IQVIA Technologies becomes a trusted third-party advisor, representing sites' interests to the sponsor and vice versa. Our experience and objectivity help remove emotional barriers in place from any past grievances and solve persistent problems with a fact-based, informed approach.

Figure 2: A 2-pronged approach to customer success, independent of IQVIA CRO services



Separate but united customer success organizations

In IQVIA Technologies' Clinical Trial Payments organization, the two customer success teams are Client Services and Site Solutions. Client Services focuses on the needs of the sponsors of clinical trials and contract research organizations (CROs), while Site Solutions deals directly with site satisfaction, site system setup/maintenance, invoice processing, inquiries, reconciliations, and more.

Client services: Working with sponsors to continually improve clinical trial payments

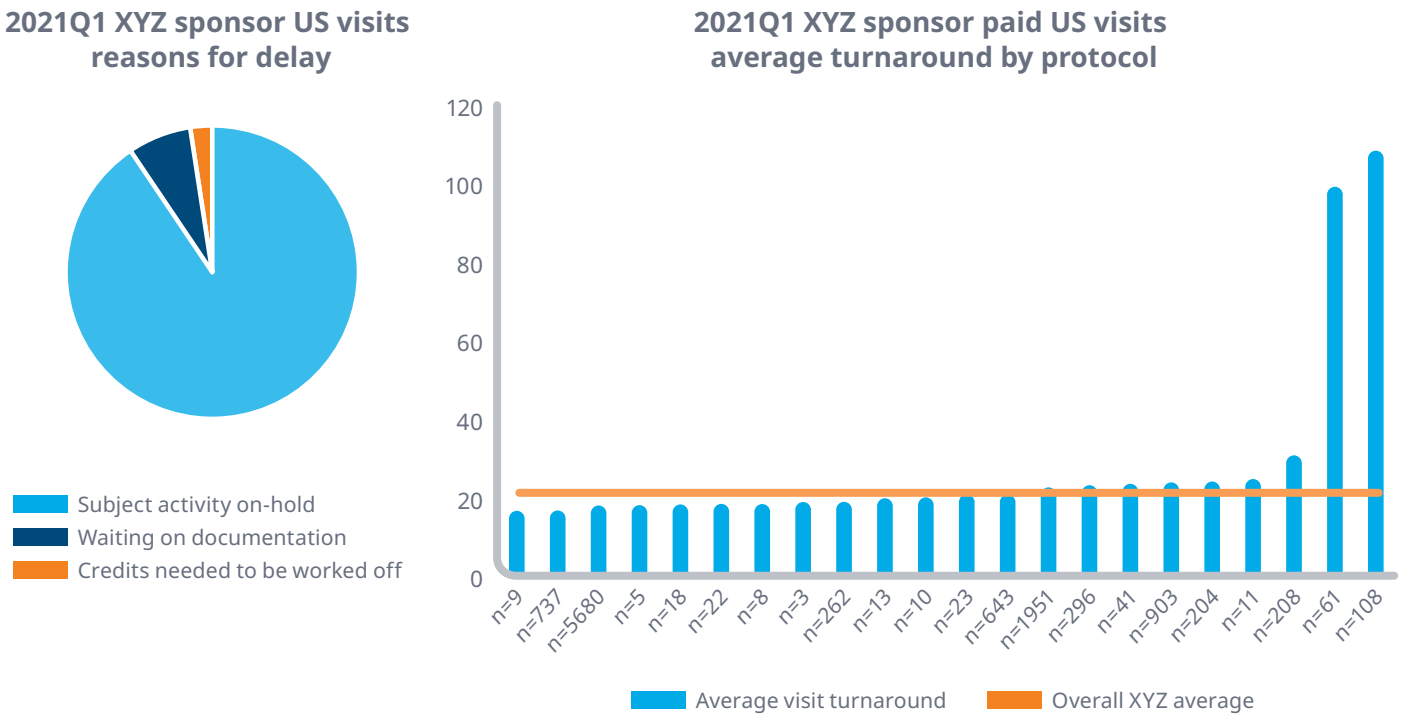
The Client Services group within the IQVIA Clinical Trial Payments organization is guided by principles that ensure the highest levels of customer satisfaction are achieved across global studies for every sponsor.

GOVERNANCE

The Clinical Trial Payments governance meeting is the basis of ensuring long term success and growth. It is held at a regular cadence to build relationships and open transparent lines of communication. Implementing a site payments program around the world is much more complicated than a software rollout, and change management principles need to be applied.

During governance meetings, in-depth reviews of client-specific metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) from the previous period are held. Client Services and the sponsor identify underlying processes to be improved. Turnaround time in areas such as invoice processing, receipt of contractual documents, patient visit payment processing, and more are studied. Depending on the areas that have been identified, additional members of leadership from IQVIA Technologies and the sponsor may be present during these discussions to ensure that there is alignment, buy in, and adoption.

Figure 3: Paid US visit metrics



The IQVIA Technologies team is laser-focused on paying sites within contractual timelines. Client Services minimizes risks of delays in investigator payments by collecting metrics on payment-related processes as granularly as possible, which allows us to pinpoint specific delays and reasons tied to each one. As shifts in regulations and industry environment occur, we work together with our clients to adapt, enhance, and overcome process-related challenges.

FUNDING

The funding mechanisms being put in place is another area of focus when IQVIA Technologies begins working with a sponsor. The timeframe in which we receive funds will dictate how quickly we can turn around payments to sites. We offer several flexible funding options:

Advanced Funding Options

- Funding Tracking: Using our internal Grant Funding Log report, we can monitor how low an advance grant is getting and request a new advance once a certain percentage has been reached
  - » Example: $100,000 grant received, request new grant at 20% remaining ($20,000)
- Funding Based on Reported Actuals
- Funding Based on Reported actuals with Partial Advance
- Just-In-Time Funding

PARTNERSHIP

In early stages of working with new sponsors, it is imperative to understand the pain points they have experienced in the past. Client Services encourages new clients to provide transparent information into what has worked well and where they have faced issues with investigator payments. This allows us to identify risks early on and proactively implement processes to avoid similar occurrences in the future.

For instance, sponsors may face issues with specific country restrictions, taxation issues, CTA verbiage, and payment terms. The IQVIA Clinical Trial Payments team deploys internal tax experts, as well as a vast rest-of-world (ROW) team with years of experience in process implementation and in dealing with specific country government-related restrictions.

We work closely with sponsors across the industry that are looking for new and creative ways to improve CTA payment language. Workshops are held involving subject matter experts in contracting, which in turn help sponsors create streamlined payment terms. These updated terms and shifts in the CTAs create less confusion at the site level as well as decrease payment-related inquiries.

ADAPTABILITY

While our solution is built on standard processes, a client may have specific requests or requirements that other clients have not asked for. We strive to accommodate all client requests – without overpromising – to ensure a smooth experience for both client and site. These include:

- Specialized reporting
- Expedited start-up
- Additional regularly scheduled update meetings (outside of governance)

Adaptability to specific client needs is part of IQVIA Clinical Trial Payments commitment to excellence and the highest levels of customer satisfaction.

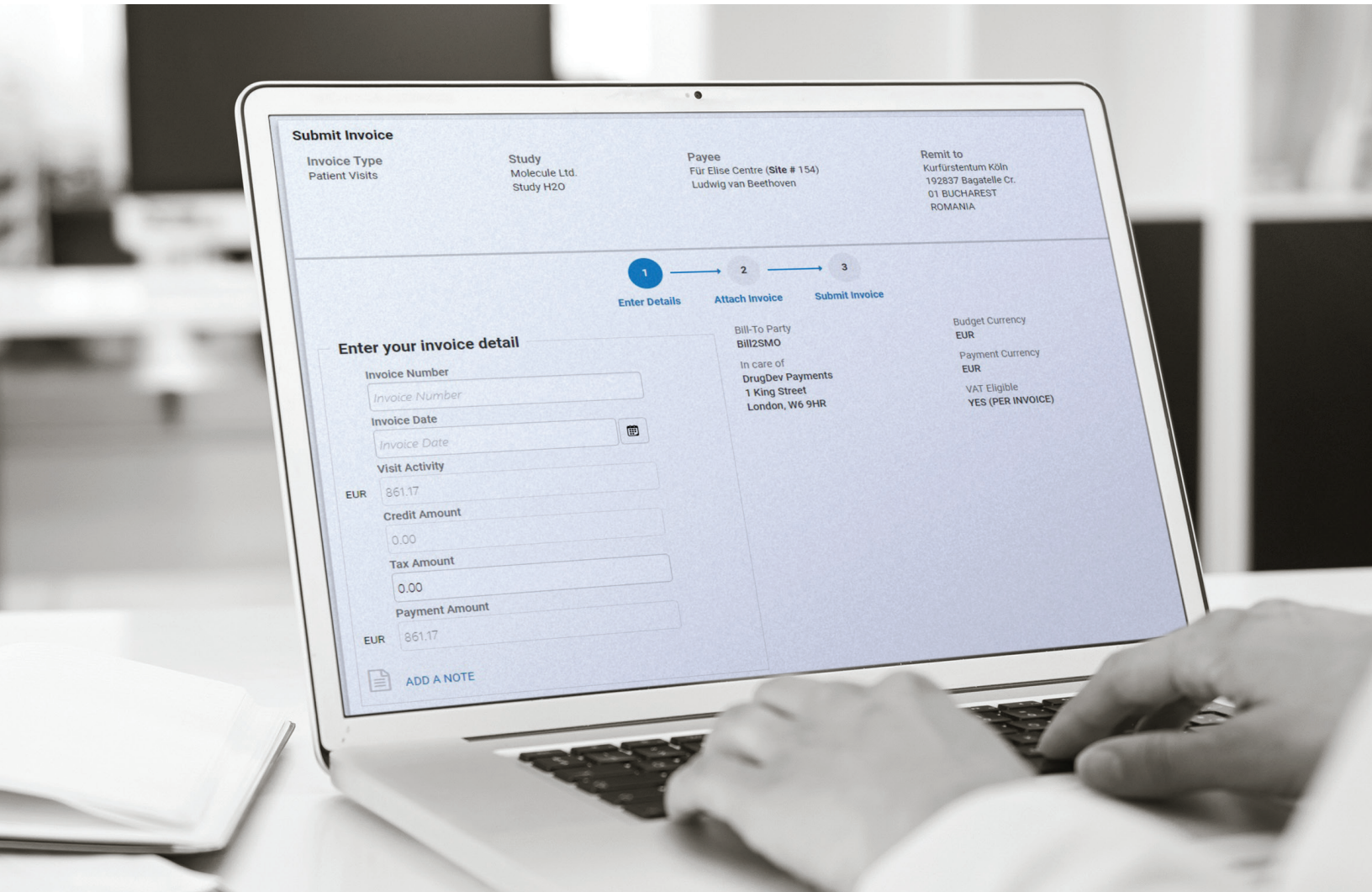
Site solutions: Advocating for sites to get them paid quickly and easily

Sites face numerous challenges with technology and processes across the studies they are running. Often, there is a quick fix to the issue at hand, if only the site coordinator or administrator could easily access the right system or reach the right person to get a question answered. That is why IQVIA Clinical Trials Payments formed a dedicated Site Solutions team in 2017.

Unlike organizations where customer service is a mass inbox, answered by an agent who may have little exposure to the study in question, IQVIA Clinical Trial Payments provides dedicated sponsor/study-aligned resources to site personnel, focused on ensuring that every facility is paid as expediently as possible. Site Solutions supports more than 32 languages in 110 countries.

WITH EVERY NEW STUDY, THE SITE SOLUTIONS TEAM ENGAGES PROACTIVELY TO:

- Locate, connect with, and build relationships with key site personnel responsible for any aspect of investigator payments
- Educate site contacts on proper invoicing according to sponsor directives to avoid payment delays
- Ensure site contacts have immediate access to and training on all available resources from IQVIA Technologies, including the Site Payments Portal



NOT JUST ISSUE RESOLUTION

The Site Solutions team for IQVIA Clinical Trial Payments is not limited to working on tactical issues that present themselves during customer service inquiries. Their first-hand knowledge of sites' concerns gets fed back to the Client Services team, along with metrics and trends from all customer service channels, such as the helpdesk system. Governance meetings are a formal channel where together, Site Solutions and Client Services make the sponsor aware of ongoing site challenges, advocate for strategic changes and/or process improvements to address them, and get decisions expedited.

PROACTIVE RESPONSE DURING COVID-19

The initial lockdowns due to the global pandemic increased the financial strain on clinical research sites. IQVIA Technologies collaborated closely with many of its clients to ensure that sites continued to be paid in a timely manner; that they received compensation for activities associated with new COVID-19 protocols, such as additional testing and staff hours; and that cash flow was aided by releasing holdbacks.

At the same time, Site Solutions mobilized its team to reach out and convert the payment method of more than 300 sites from paper check to electronic. This effort helped to maximize cash flow to sites that had previously committed to paper checks but suddenly had no one available to receive and process them.

AS INVESTIGATORS AROUND THE WORLD SEE THEIR CONCERNS ELEVATED AND RESOLVED, THEIR SATISFACTION WITH THE SPONSOR INCREASES MEASURABLY.

Conclusion

At IQVIA Technologies, we recognize that our ability to get a payment to a site may be the difference between a successful or failed clinical trial; or impact the willingness of an investigator to continue to perform clinical research in the future. Our payments technology platform is unmatched in the industry; but the "secret sauce" in a successful clinical trial payments program is not software. tis a two-pronged approach to customer service and support – partnering and communicating proactively, giving a voice to sites in governance, and continuously improving through metrics and action.

About the authors

JACKIE TORRES
Associate Director, Site Solutions,
Clinical Trial Payments,
IQVIA Technologies

Jackie has 15 years' experience in Clinical Trial Payments, always striving to exceed client expectations with an attention to process improvements. She is currently focused on delivering exceptional value to clinical research sites by applying the Lean methodology used across the organization. She encourages her team daily to create the "Ultimate Site Experience" and has launched several initiatives to increase site satisfaction.

JASON FANELLI
Manager, Site Solutions,
Clinical Trial Payments,
IQVIA Technologies

Jason has a diverse background in journalism, broadcasting, sales, and customer support. During his 6-year tenure with IQVIA Technologies and DrugDev, he has taken on increasing responsibilities in the Clinical Trial Payments organization. Besides communicating with sites proactively and resolving inquiries, Jason serves as Editor in Chief of the team's monthly newsletter and directs/produces internal videos.

About IQVIA Technologies

IQVIA Technologies develops purpose-built solutions on a future-state architecture to enable remote clinical trials and transform decision making across the entire life sciences product lifecycle. For more than a dozen years, we've delivered innovation for trial design and site engagement through our market-leading, cloud-based products and tech-enabled services such as GrantPlan, Investigator Site Portal, Clinical Trial Payments, and Complete Consent. Our technologies orchestrate clinical trials with rich data sources, seamless connectivity, and intuitive design to drive smarter, faster trials for sponsors, sites, and patients.

About IQVIA Clinical Trial Payments

IQVIA Clinical Trial Payments, integrating the best of DrugDev payment technology and IQVIA's global scale, is the most advanced and robust site payment solution available. Learn why sponsors of all sizes and specialties trust IQVIA to make nearly $2B of payments each year, spanning more than 70,000 sites in 110 countries.

Clinical Trial Payments is part of the Digital Site Suite within IQVIA Technologies Orchestrated Clinical Trials, the first end-to-end platform designed to bring harmony across studies – now and into the future – and make clinical trials simpler, smarter and faster for everyone.

CONTACT US

+1 888-336-3748

OrchestrateYourTrials@iqvia.com

iqvia.com/OCT

IQVIA TECHNOLOGIES

09.2021.TCS