

CASE STUDY

Chronic Care Management for Ophthalmology



In the Rio Grande Valley, care managers help **Thurmond Eye** patients avoid complications and protect their vision while generating substantial incremental revenue.

**LOCATION**

Based in Rio Grande Valley, TX

PROVIDERS

8 ophthalmologists,
5 optometrists

PART OF

ASCEND VISION
PARTNERS

WITHIN 1 YEAR...

- High-quality between-visit care extended to **800+ at-risk eye patients**
- **Incremental revenue of \$45k/month** funds good care and allows reinvestment in practice
- Increased medication adherence

PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Having witnessed the success of CCM at Thurmond Eye, Ascend Vision Partners will implement CCM in their other 36 ophthalmology practices in 2025 using Sweeten Health and Phamily.

CCM for Ophthalmology

When the team at Thurmond Eye was approached about Chronic Care Management (CCM), they were intrigued. They have a huge population of patients with conditions like diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma who could benefit from close monitoring.

Many of these patients see their ophthalmologist every three months - far more than they see their PCP. Ophthalmologists are uniquely well-positioned to quarterback the care of these patients to prevent or slow declining eye health.

“Our practices are a pivot point for so many chronic ailments that really do affect your eyes,” explained Chad Tomlinson, Chief Growth Officer at Ascend Vision Partners. “Our physicians are always looking for ways to expand patient access and patient care, and this seemed like a really good service we could offer and a touchpoint with our patients to keep them compliant with our programs.”

A Turnkey Solution for Chronic Care Management

The partners at Thurmond Eye were excited about the opportunity to manage and keep closer tabs on their patients who come in and out of the office with worsening conditions that can progress to vision loss if not managed well.

“Making the patient feel heard and connected is the only tool we have in making them compliant with any kind of chronic disease management,” explained Tomlinson. “Any tools that we can use to keep our patients engaged will only help us improve the quality of care.”

They knew they would need additional support to get their patients enrolled in a CCM program and provide day-to-day care management - so they worked with Sweeten Health LPNs using the Phamily care management platform.

“We wanted to have a partner who could help us, because we are not a primary care organization,” said Tomlinson. “The program launch was straightforward and easy. The

hardest part was us finding the right data for everyone to work off of, but Sweeten Health did 95% of all the work on that. It has been a good process. They analyzed our data and helped us understand what we could expect. They educated our call center about the messages that would be sent to patients, so that they knew what was going on. And they educated our providers about the workflows and protocols they would use. It’s been good every step of the way. Sweeten has been highly communicative, and our patients have stayed happy.”

The ophthalmology providers were initially less familiar with care management programs, but soon came to appreciate Sweeten Health’s methodical approach to communication cadences and the positive feedback they received from their patients.

“



“[CCM] seemed like a really good service we could offer and a touchpoint with our patients to keep them compliant with our programs.”

CHAD TOMLINSON

Chief Growth Officer, Ascend Vision Partners

Better Patient Care at Scale

The Sweeten Health LPNs seamlessly integrated into Thurmond Eye's workflows, following the care protocols established by the practice. As an example, the care managers made sure that patients with diabetic retinopathy were taking their meds, monitored their sugar levels, and got them into the office immediately upon any indication of a worsening condition.

Since introducing CCM, the practice has increased the number of patients picking up their medications post-operatively. CCM was launched in conjunction with revamped documentation, and the practice now also sees better medication adherence.

And because of the Phamily platform, the practice was able to scale this care across hundreds of

patients, profitably. Their CCM program generates about \$45k in monthly revenue at a 50% margin to reinvest in the practice.

"This program has been a value add for our patients, but has also been a revenue generation opportunity for new partners coming onto our platform," said Tomlinson. **"It helps with patient access as our practices get busier, and it helps alleviate the financial burden on providers who find themselves working harder to compensate for reimbursement rates getting slashed every year."**

Expansion Across Ascend Vision Partners

Thurmond Eye has seen so much success with the CCM program that Ascend Vision Partners plans to roll CCM out to their other 36 practices, which range from 25,000 to 42,000 square feet in size. This will enable thousands more at-risk eye patients to protect their vision.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 CCM is appropriate for eye care!** Specialists can leverage this Medicare reimbursement program to provide high-quality between-visit care.
- 2 Not every Medicare or Medicare Advantage patient will be a good candidate** for an ophthalmology-led CCM program. However, ophthalmologists do have a significant subset of patients who need to be carefully managed to avoid surgery or vision loss.
- 3 Because these patients need close monitoring, a once-a-month phone call, check-the-box approach to CCM will not work.** Patients need regular, frequent check-ins (made easy, cost-effective, and scalable by Phamily).
- 4 Patient satisfaction is key — and having more frequent touchpoints drives patient satisfaction with the practice.** Practices do need to make sure patients are aware that there may be a modest co-pay every month, and that patients understand the value of ongoing care management in helping them protect their vision.

What can Connected Care do for your Ophthalmology practice?

Chronic Care Management (CCM) is a good fit for patients with eye diseases that require ongoing management like:

- **Diabetic Retinopathy.** Chronic diabetes can lead to progressive retinal damage. Care managers can ensure regular screenings, monitor blood sugar control, and coordinate with primary care or endocrinologists.
- **Glaucoma.** Increased intraocular pressure can damage the optic nerve. Care managers help with medication adherence, regular pressure checks, and surgical follow-ups if needed.
- **Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD).** Care managers can aid in managing treatment plans, such as injections or supplements, and coordinate care to preserve vision.

CCM helps patients who have cataracts with co-morbidities, chronic dry eye syndrome, uveitis, retinal vein occlusion, or systemic diseases with ocular complications. Care managers can also support post-operative management.

Whether your practice is large or small, we can help you deliver better patient care while being fairly compensated for all the between-visit work you already do.

Phamily enables ophthalmology practices like Thurmond Eye to deliver exceptional between-visit care to hundreds of patients, while earning fair compensation for that work.

Scale consistent, high-quality care across all your patients who need it - with the right solution for your practice:

- **Turnkey Program: 4 Hours to Launch.** LPNs from Sweeten Health fit right into your practice workflows.
- **In-House Program: Billable Events in 30 Days.** Phamily enables 1 care manager to manage a panel of 500 patients.

Get in touch today for a free consultation — we can help you figure out how to launch a profitable Connected Care program at your practice.

 phamily.com / sweetenhealth.com

 sales@phamily.com

