

CASE STUDY

Medical Device Warranty Audit & Tracking at Northeast Georgia Health System

ABOUT NORTHEAST GEORGIA HEALTH SYSTEM

Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) is a leading not-for-profit healthcare organization dedicated to enhancing the health and quality of life of communities in Northeast Georgia. With five hospital campuses—NGMC Gainesville, NGMC Braselton, NGMC Barrow, NGMC Habersham, and NGMC Lumpkin—NGHS operates more than 950 beds and employs over 1,300 medical professionals across 60+ specialties. Staying true to its mission, NGHS reinvests its revenues into improving services and implementing innovative programs to benefit the communities it serves.

TOTAL VISITS:
1.7 million+

MEDICAL STAFF:
1300+

LICENSED BEDS:
950+

MEDICAL SPECIALITIES:
60+

SURGERIES:
29,500+

PROBLEM

NGHS faced persistent difficulties in managing explanted medical device returns for warranty credit evaluations. Despite utilizing a specialty software vendor, the process was complicated by its scope, requiring coordination across multiple departments. This complexity not only heightened the risk of errors but also demanded significant time and effort from clinical staff, distracting them from their primary focus—patient care.

In alignment with its mission of continuous improvement, NGHS leadership sought a solution that could reduce the administrative burden, simplify the device return process and make compliance easier. This search reflected the organization's commitment to minimizing inefficiencies and refocusing clinical resources on patient care.

DISCOVERING SPENDMEND

The first introduction to SpendMend's Medical Device Warranty Tracking solution (+Explants) came through a webinar attended by an NGHS registered nurse. The SpendMend solution stood out for its unique combination of a cloud-based repository and live support team, offering services beyond traditional software. The live support feature was particularly appealing as it promised to reduce the demand on clinical staff by handling evaluations and facilitating the return process.

This promising first impression, coupled with the responsiveness of SpendMend leadership, encouraged NGHS to consider transitioning from their existing vendor to SpendMend's +Explants solution.



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The decision to implement SpendMend's +Explants solution involved stakeholders from across the health system, including the cardiovascular clinics, operating rooms, Compliance department, IT, Information Security, Privacy department, Legal team, Revenue Cycle, and Accounts Payable departments. Despite initial hesitation due to prior investments in another solution, SpendMend worked closely with NGHS to address concerns.

Key steps in the decision-making process included:

- **Strong References:** SpendMend organized discussions with similar-sized health systems already using the +Explants solution. These sessions provided NGHS stakeholders with real-world insights into the solution's effectiveness.
- **Ease of Use:** SpendMend's solution was highlighted as user-friendly, requiring minimal input from clinical staff. Its cloud-based design facilitated quick data entry and processing.
- **Dedicated Support:** Unlike competitors, SpendMend provided a dedicated team to oversee device evaluations, manage returns, and ensure expedited implementation while safeguarding accuracy in every step of the process.

Ultimately, SpendMend's commitment to reducing clinical workload and streamlining the warranty credit process made it the clear choice for NGHS.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Implementation of SpendMend's +Explants solution was efficient and seamless. NGHS's Information Security team quickly approved the secure, cloud-based platform. Within 30 days, the system was operational, and staff were trained to use it effectively.

Key aspects of the implementation process included:

- **Training:** SpendMend delivered virtual training sessions tailored to each department. The training was so comprehensive that NGHS did not require the additional onsite training option.
- **Process Coordination:** SpendMend assigned a team to manage critical functions, such as reviewing explanted device details, coordinating shipping labels for returns, and auditing manufacturer reports to ensure no eligible devices were missed.
- **Immediate Usability:** Staff members were able to log in and start using the system immediately after installation, minimizing downtime.

RESULTS & IMPACT

In just nine months, NGHS reported substantial improvements across several metrics:

- **Device Evaluations:** Over 440 explanted devices were evaluated, with more than 21 returned to manufacturers for warranty credit consideration.
- **Time Savings:** Clinical staff time spent on administrative tasks was significantly reduced, allowing more focus on patient care.
- **Compliance:** NGHS achieved 100% compliance with regulatory requirements for warranty credit evaluations.
- **Financial Benefits:** NGHS maximized their warranty credits and experienced a 25% increase in retained dollars, significantly enhancing financial performance.

These results highlight the significant impact of SpendMend's +Explants solution in optimizing NGHS's operations and improving overall efficiency, including a 75% reduction in the man hours required to manage the process.

FUTURE PLANS

Looking ahead, NGHS plans to maintain and strengthen its partnership with SpendMend. The organization remains committed to leveraging SpendMend's expertise to further optimize its device management processes and explore additional opportunities for operational improvement.



Northeast Georgia
Health System

"NGHS strives for continuous improvement in all we do. Since we started using the Medical Device Warranty Credit service of SpendMend, we have significantly improved our explanted device management process, which increased savings for our system and made compliance with a complex regulatory requirement much easier." – **Steve Kelly, Chief Compliance Officer, NGHS**