IMPROVING PATIENT FLOW: THE COMPLEXITIES OF LARGE, MULTISPECIALTY PRACTICES

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Operations Management
- Where are the bottlenecks?
  "constraints"
  - What impedes smooth flow?
  - Broad deep river vs. turbulent shallow rapids
  - Where are people waiting?
Intergy Time Stamps

- Time stamps are useful
- Ensures time tracking on patient's record
- Can improve documentation and patient care
- Tracks the course of day
- Shows effect of quality improvement efforts
- Time stamp measurement

Looking For Bottlenecks

"How long are you in for?"

Room Set Up

Out with the old, in with the new?
**OCT testing is slowing flow through the office**

- Problem: patients waiting for OCT testing
- Problem: OCT machine is slow
- Problem: Patient takes 45 minutes per patient
- New doctors increase utilization of OCT
- Doctor is waiting for patients: USCMH
  - Direct line of revenue
Bottlenecks can move!
- Once you've fixed a problem, see where the bottleneck has moved
- E.g., new OCT machine solved bottleneck
- Now retina MD is bottleneck!
- Improve efficiency of doctor
  - Scribe
  - Difficult–pharmacy calls, work notes, etc.
  - Reduce "garbage time" e.g., looking for supplies

Operational Adjustments: Support Staff
- Personnel
  - Moved 2 strong tech to scribe/inject position
  - Moved 2 weaker techs to floor

MGM Operational Adjustments: Schedule
- Adjust schedule and template with AA
  - Start time moved to 7:30 AM
  - Lunch time blocked 11:30-12:15
  - Schedule template adjusted
  - Eliminate callbacks
Being Fast is not always the best

Operations Management: The Low-Hanging Fruit

- Find Dummy Constraints
  - $1000 per day saved the entire retina service
  - Incomplete workflows
  - Keep supply closeted by

- Find Policy Constraints
  - Office hours increased by ½ hr 3 days a week
  - Lunch breaks
  - Coordinate office and testing schedules

Increased # of pts seen/day by 4.1
Average includes OR days (1/2 day of pts)

Improving Patient Flow:
Number of patients seen per day

Effect of schedule change:

Number of patients seen/d
Operations Management Summary

- Increased productivity is nearly pure profit
  - Fixed expenses remain the same
  - One additional patient per day at $200/pat is $48,000 per year increased profit

Improving patient satisfaction with wait times

Operational Improvements

- Less congestion and frenzy
- More patient satisfaction
- More revenue
- Better patient care
- You can do it, too!
What Makes Flow Turbulent Despite a Well Run System?

- Unusually complicated or difficult patients
- Staff absence/sicknesses
- Schedule problems
  - Add-ones
  - Early arrivals

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How to Measure Flow in Your Office

- Make a diagram of the process in your office e.g., check in -> tech -> OD -> glasses -> check out.
- Give each patient a time stamp sheet to measure start and end time at each step.
  - Give a clipboard, pen and time sheet.
- Even one day’s worth of data is useful.
- Pick a busy day if possible.

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How to Measure Flow in Your Office

- Determine where the process is inefficient.
  - Don’t be afraid to make changes—try things!
  - Feel the freedom of change.
  - Patient satisfaction is helped by smiles, warm attitude, information.
Conclusion

- Interesting and useful data
- The best improvements are free!
- Refining your practice
  - More severity
  - Better patient satisfaction
  - Better financial performance