

Improving Patient Access to Care in Medical Gynecology Through Realignment of the Care Team Model

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Background: The medical gynecology team serves as an entry point to the Department of Medical & Surgical Gynecology for many patients seeking to establish care within the department. This includes evaluation and management of new and complex conditions and routine gynecologic care. The medical gynecology team is comprised of 2 part-time consultants and 3 full-time advanced practice provider (APP) staff. Based on the practice model that was historically utilized, consultant and APP staff saw new and consult appointments, as well as their own established/return visit patients. This created limited access for new and consult visits (N&Cs) for consultants, as they managed all of their own return patients visits. As a result, calendar templates had a disproportionate volume of return patient slots, making it difficult for new and consult patients to see a consultant. Patient care was therefore delayed for new medical gynecology patients wishing to establish care within the department, leading some patients to seek outside care.

Objective: To increase volume of N&C appointments with consultants in medical gynecology without incremental provider FTEs. Primary metrics of success included increased number of completed N&C appointments in medical gynecology, while ensuring continued strength in Press Ganey® patient satisfaction scores by maintaining or improving top-box scores of patients that are likely to recommend their provider.

Planning/Research Methods: The medical gynecology team and leadership engaged in a comprehensive review and analysis to determine variables and opportunities to increase N&C patient volume, as an opportunity to continue to bring new patients into the department. Activities included:

- Engaging key stakeholders and resources outside of the medical gynecology, including surgeons, medical practice secretaries, schedulers, and nurses to discuss the patient impact on limited new patient access.
- In analyzing challenges around limited new patient access, key insights were arranged into 4 general themes: (1) patients were satisfied by establishing care with a consultant as a new patient and maintaining that relationship for all continued follow-up, however it was not the best use of consultant time and expertise, (2) patient satisfaction with APP staff was excellent, as measured through Press Ganey® patient satisfaction scores, (3) medical gynecology serves as the entry point into the department for many patients, also serving as a feeder to the surgical practice; therefore, continued new patient growth was imperative for department growth, and (4) the medical gynecology division functioned primarily as 5 independent providers with independent practices, and opportunities existed to function in a care team environment.

In prioritizing interventions available to address these themes, implementation of a medical gynecology care team model, whereby new patients entered the practice via an N&C appointment with a consultant and were later transitioned to APP care, was selected as the intervention having the most potential impact on N&C appointment volume growth.

Interventions Implemented: Beginning January 2020, clinic calendars of medical gynecology providers were modified to support transitioning N&C volume to consultants and established/return volume to APPs. This included templating 10 N&C patient slots and 2 established patient slots per day per consultant, and templating 10 established slots and 2 N&C slots per day per APP. This added incremental N&C capacity for the consultants and established patient capacity for the APPs, meanwhile transitioning to a care team model with division of new vs. established patients across the team.

Results: Total volume of completed medical gynecology appointments increased in 2020 and patients embraced the care team model, recognizing their care would be transitioned from a consultant to an APP for long-term follow-up. It is important to note that this volume growth was still evidenced despite the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a two-month furlough of all APP staff. These results and impact are largely transferrable to other combined medical and surgical practices, demonstrating the key impact that care team models have on continued growth of new patient volume.

- Results showed 92% growth in completed N&C appointments for consultants, and 40% growth in established patient appointments for APPs (578 consultant N&C in 2019 vs. 1108 in 2020) (2195 APP established visits in 2019 vs. 3065 in 2020)
- Results also showed 35.1% growth in gross revenue for consultants in 2020 compared to 2019 and 1.1% growth in gross revenue for APPs in 2020. Overall revenue growth for the medical gynecology team was 10.1% in 2020.
- Patient satisfaction was positively impacted, as evidenced by an average 3.52% increase in top-box score for patients' likelihood to recommend their provider across the medical gynecology team, as measured via Press Ganey® surveys in 2019 and 2020 (88th percentile score for 12 months pre-intervention vs. 91st percentile score for the 12 months post-intervention).

