Improving patient flow using live information

Sharon Prinsloo, RN, CM (sprinslo@seha.ae) Murtaza Mohiuddin Quadri Syed, MS, PG-HIM, CCS (mmsyd@seha.ae)
Bakr Sadoon Ismail, GP (bismail@seha.ae) Naveedullah Khan, BS(CS), PMP,CSP (navkhan@seha.ae) Richmond Austria, DIH, CHDA,CPHQ,PMP,CMQ/OE (raustria@seha.ae) Elsadig Elmardi, MBCh, MPH (eelmardi@seha.ae)
Khuloud Abdulla Mohsen Obaid Aldhaleei, M.B.CH.B., MRCGP (kdheei@seha.ae)

Objective of Program: Development of a tool to support managers and improve patient experience related to patients waiting time. Waiting time as KPI is defined as the time interval between registrations up to a patient being seen by the clinician. It is a relevant indicator toward patient access and satisfaction, affecting the health center’s reputation and marketing strategy toward a competitive advantage. The process used at the time involved having a report extracted for the waiting times and shared with all clinic managers on monthly base. The disadvantage of this particular process was the lack of current waiting time status to enable the managers to take action and mitigate concerns such as bottlenecks within the flow of patients in order to optimize utilization of the manpower toward the experience of the patient during the journey. The improvement involved the development of a tool to convert the electronic data into a report format with easy access to managers to be used daily and during peak patient flow hours. The key performance indicator set for waiting time within the organization is 85% of all patients to be seen within 45 minutes.

Planning/Research Methods: FOCUS PDCA and Project management methodology was used. Innovative approaches within the process included regular meetings, brainstorming sessions and linking strategic objectives to staff appraisal objectives. In addition knowledge sharing as well as training sessions in order to define ownership initiating changes in process and functions as well as assigning accountability. Transparency in communication the essence, with a great deal of community involvement as well. Celebrating of the achievements was positive toward motivating employees.

Implementation Methods: On the initiative to manage patient flow having proved successful within one clinic. Further onsite analysis was done recognizing variances in the report itself as well as the patient flow cycle addressed to maximize the outcome. The project was elevated becoming a multisite, multidisciplinary team process, represented by IT, Web development, Quality, HIM and health operations as departments. The extraction of data is now centralized by using the live waiting time dashboard as a tool. The patient flow cycle reviewed and a patient flow coordinator role established in support of the high volume clinics not meeting the waiting time target. All data converted to information was validated by the HIM and quality team as part of project analysis prior to releasing the link and doing the training for the managers on the use of the live waiting time dashboard tool, inclusions and exclusions were standardized as part of the process The live dashboard is now accessible through AHS intranet and patient flow can be viewed in real-time. Remote access is included.

Results (e.g., cost savings, increased productivity, and improved quality of care): The waiting time achieved prior the project was at 80% and has improved to 87% after implementing the tool thereby meeting the KPI. Also, this resulted to an improvement in access as well as the overall experience for the patients as indicated by the decrease in complaints related to waiting time. During a survey of managers followed by a focus group discussion, the use of the dashboard as tool and the benefits of the team based process was highlighted which indicated that 83% of managers used the information obtained from the dashboard.