Texas Children’s Hospital
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Profile
Texas Children’s Hospital opened in 1954 and is currently the largest children’s hospital in the U.S. Our mission is to create a healthier future for children and women throughout our global community by leading inpatient care, education, and research. With three hospital locations, over 40 pediatric subspecialties, 52 Texas Children’s Pediatrics Clinics in Houston and Austin, 12 Urgent Care Clinics, seven Specialty Care Clinics, and one Health Plan with over 420,000 members, we are treating patients from all 50 states and more than 60 countries. Texas Children’s comprises of over 950 beds, more than 13,500 employees, 2,000 faculty, residents, and fellows, and over 4.2 million patient encounters system-wide per year. This includes our Pavilion for Women with 1.3 million square feet dedicated to caring for women with over 150 physicians and midwives, three dedicated OB/GYN practices, and 6,000+ deliveries annually.

Date Stage 7 was achieved: December 17th, 2019

The Challenge
Texas Children’s recognized opportunities for improvement related to patient and referring provider satisfaction around appointment scheduling. These opportunities included difficulty making an appointment, long wait times for obtaining an appointment, and difficulty referring patients.

To address this, Texas Children’s identified three focus areas which included optimizing appointment scheduling, making referring easy, and empowering patients and families by leveraging technology.

Implementation Overview
CEO Mark A. Wallace communicated a call to action: “It is really hard to get into Texas Children’s. We are going to fix that. It is my responsibility. It is your responsibility. We have to come together as one amazing team and get this done! It doesn’t matter what decisions have to be made, or what resources have to be allocated to Access and Patient Scheduling. We have got to make this happen, and we will!”

An Executive Steering Team (EST) was created to lead the effort to improve patient access. The EST included senior operational and physician leaders from multiple entities across the system. The EST was built on a foundation of sustainability, data analytics, marketing and communication, and change management.

The EST identified three goals:
1. To optimize appointment scheduling through the use of standardized appointment templates, and automation of appointment reminders and recapture.
2. To empower patients and families by leveraging technology through improved utilization of MyChart patient portal activation, implementation of electronic fast pass waitlist in MyChart, and the rollout of online scheduling.
3. To make referring easy through the use of standardized referral forms, automation of visit summaries sent to referring physicians, and enhanced communication through EpicCare Link.
Resulting Value / ROI
As a result, Texas Children’s was able to improve appointment scheduling and referrals, which led to the following improvements:

• Optimize appointment scheduling:
  – 3% decrease in appointment no-show rate.
  – 18% increase in patient volume.
  – 83% of subspecialties now offer a new appointment within 14 days.

• Empowering patients and families by leveraging technology:
  – 13% increase in patient portal activation.
  – Electronic Fast Pass Waitlist in MyChart has seen over 5,000 offers accepted with a 46 days improvement on average.
  – 83% of subspecialties now offer a new appointment within 14 days.

• Make referring easy:
  - 60 separate referral processes unified into one system-wide referral process.
  - Reduced referral completion time from 2 minutes to ~30 seconds.
  - Visit summaries sent to 100% of referring physicians.

Lessons Learned
As a result, Texas Children’s was able to improve appointment scheduling and referrals, which led to the following improvements:

• Match interventions to clinical dynamics: a variety of interventions have been implemented to improve patient access at Texas Children’s Hospital. There is no single remedy to cure hospital access.

• Secure physician buy-in: make clear goals of each patient access improvement initiative, announce any planned changes in advance of implementation, actively solicit provider feedback, and communicate broadly.

• Measure impact: the true impact of access initiatives can only be demonstrated if outcomes are clearly defined before the interventions are enacted. Take the time to learn how others have studied the effects of access initiatives and define clear outcomes for those initiatives.

QUOTE FROM ORGANIZATION EXECUTIVE:

“By standardizing processes and improving efficiency with modern technology, the way the organization approaches patient access was completely revolutionized.”

– Carrie Rys, MBA, Assistant Vice President of Pediatric Ambulatory Operations

The access initiative at Texas Children’s led to increased appointment availability, increased patient volumes, better ease of scheduling, and overall improvements in our ambulatory workflows, all of which have resulted in improved patient experience.
Texas Children’s Hospital, located in Houston, Texas, is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to create a healthier future for children and women throughout our global community by leading in patient care, education and research. We are proud to be consistently ranked among the top children’s hospitals in the nation.