

Essential Question:

Which factors contribute to long wait times, both in the waiting room and time spent waiting to be admitted, in my mentorship location, Northeast Georgia Medical Center's Emergency Department, and how can the staff anticipate and adapt to these factors?

Special thanks to:

All of the nurses and doctors who helped to show me and teach me throughout my year spent in the Northeast Georgia Medical Center Emergency Department.

The Waiting is Over

A detailed review of wait times in the Emergency Department



Picture from: www.nghs.com

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Picture from: medstation.yale.edu

Interesting Insights

One thing I have observed during the year is that more often than not, wait times in the ER are outrageous. And it's not just the time spent waiting in the waiting room. It also encompasses time spent waiting to see a doctor, time spent waiting on test results and medicine, or time spent waiting for a hospital room to open up to be admitted.

I have researched both the factors that contribute to long wait times as well as many options to curb these wait times. I have looked into several programs and procedures that are being implemented in hospitals around the globe to control waiting.

Current Issues & Solutions

There is not one specific factor that causes long wait times for patients. More often than not, it's a combination of several factors that cause extended periods of waiting. The two main factors that tend to cause long wait times are **a high patient volume** and **not enough staff members**. Due to the amount of patients in the emergency room, sometimes it can take an hour or more before the doctor can see the patient. Adding more staff member in key areas would help to alleviate some of the time patients spend waiting. My mentor, nurse Leigh Wilson, related, "I think we do need a few more nurses and definitely more techs to make moving the patients in and out of the ER quicker and more effectively. Patients are constantly having to wait on a tech to take them to their room." Overall, the issue of long wait times is a very complex one.

What is currently being implemented

Several programs and procedures are currently being implemented in order to reduce wait times.

- The hospital has made the G waiting room into curtain areas to be able to see patients which can help alleviate wait times.
- There are overflow beds in the ER where patients can be placed when there is a high influx of patients.
- The hospital has also opened overflow areas within the hospital to put admitted patients to free up more ER beds.

A New Vision for Emergency Medicine

The Aurora Sinai Medical Center in downtown Milwaukee completely revamped their emergency medicine system in order to deal with long patient wait times and make their emergency department an economically viable part of the hospital again.

What They Did

The changes made to the emergency department at Aurora Sinai Medical Center include redefining what constitutes as an emergency, creating a detailed plan for each patient, and creating same-day appointments for patients to visit a physicians office with a non-emergent condition all in accordance to the EMTALA law.

"We want the ED to be all about safety, but not in a passive fashion. Like the air traffic control system, our goal is to be proactive, to seek something more, to be assisting and directing."

The new processes at Aurora Sinai took about six months to fully implement. After that time, their census began to drop dramatically as the community began to realize that the ED was not a place for primary care. In summary, Aurora Sinai was restored to economic viability, had fewer EMTALA concerns, and saw patient satisfaction rise dramatically in the years following the implementation of the new procedures.



Picture from: www.natclymer.com