

California Health Improvement Project (CHIP)

Improving cycle times in ENT Clinic at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital

Marika Russell, MD, FACS
Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center, San Francisco, CA

Problem Statement and Underlying Causes

Cycle time for ENT clinic at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center (ZSFG) is high. The average time from check-in to check-out is 99 minutes.

- A major underlying cause of prolonged cycle times is poor scheduling practices, which have evolved in order to counter a high no-show rate (30-40%).
- In the current state, productivity is maximized by batching appointments at the beginning of the clinic so that there is always availability of patients to be seen.
- This often results in patients waiting a long time to be seen on a first-come, first-served basis.

Current State
Poor scheduling practices
High no-show rate
Long cycle times
Poor patient experience

Desired State
Rational scheduling practices
Decreased no-show rate
Decreased cycle time
Improved patient experience

Project Description

Improve cycle time (check-in to check-out) in ENT clinic at ZSFG through reduction in no-show rate and implementation of scheduling practices that maximize clinic efficiency and flow.

Goal and Objectives

Goal: Decrease cycle time (check-in to check-out) in ENT clinic at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital.

Output-oriented Objectives:

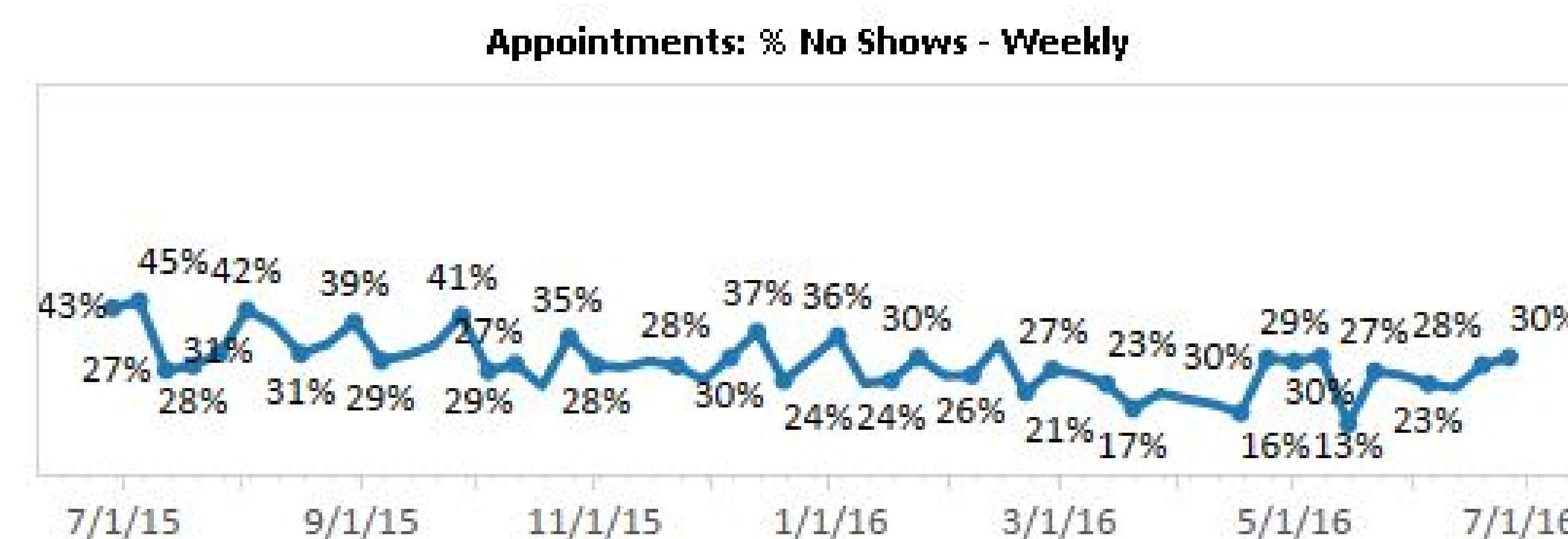
- By June 2016, decrease no-show rate in ENT clinic from 40% to <25%
- By July 2016, implement rational scheduling templates

Outcome-oriented Objective:

By September 2016, decrease average cycle time (check-in to check-out) in ENT clinic at ZSFG from 99 minutes to under 60 minutes.

Outputs & Outcomes

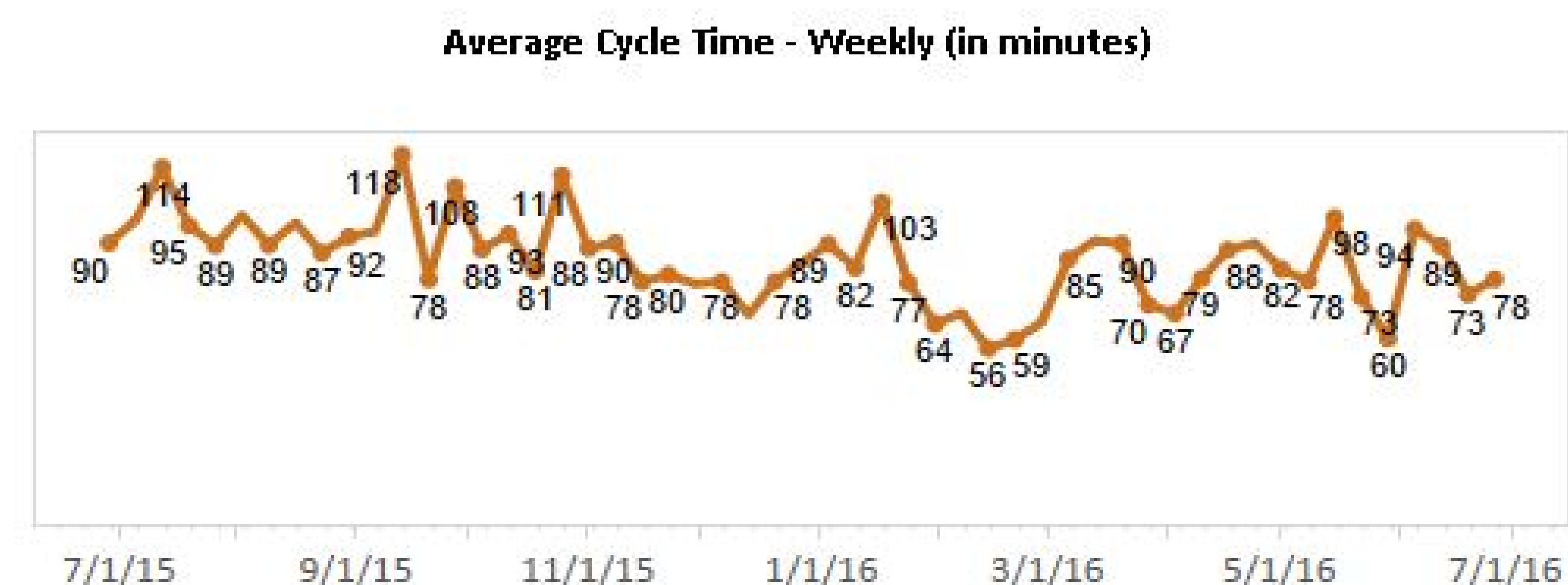
Outputs Achieved



To improve show-rate, scheduling practices were redesigned:

- New patient appointments now arranged through telephone contact to account for patient preference (not automatically scheduled and mailed to patient as done previously)
- Referring PCP included in scheduling work-flow
- Advanced appointment scheduling limited to < 4 months
- Automatic text reminder system implemented for follow-up appointments
- Call center implemented to facilitate new patient scheduling practices

Outcomes Achieved



Lessons Learned

No-show rate, cycle time and access have proven to be inextricably linked. An improvement in no-show rate translates to more patients coming to scheduled appointments, which means patients may wait longer to be seen, thereby increasing cycle time. Decreasing the number of appointment slots to account for an improved no-show rate can adversely impact access (Third Next Available Appointment – data not shown here).

While an overall trend of improvement was seen for no-show rate and cycle time, these measures still demonstrate marked variability on a weekly basis. Some of this may be due to unpredictable demand for services linked to other systems of care (ie. Emergency Room or Urgent Care follow-up), but reasons for this remain unclear. As such, redesign of scheduling templates has proven to be complex, and remains a work in progress.

Patient satisfaction, while anecdotally observed, has not been directly measured in relation to this effort. Measuring patient experience is the next phase of this project!

About My Organization



Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center (ZSFG) is the safety-net hospital for San Francisco, serving some 100,000 patients each year. It's mission is to provide quality health care with compassion and respect. The Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery (ENT) department at SFGH is a busy service, offering the full spectrum of ENT care. Approximately 5000 ambulatory visits and 400 surgeries are accomplished each year. While we pride ourselves on the quality of clinical care we deliver, we have much work to do to improve our systems of care delivery. These photographs to the left depict the waiting room and hallway outside ENT clinic on a typical day, as patients wait to be called into clinic.

Contact Me

For more information, contact me:
Marika Russell, MD, FACS
marika.russell@ucsf.edu

CHCF HEALTH CARE
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM