Reducing Room-to-Exam Time

Alexa Bisinger, MD; Deepa Ravikumar, MD; Steve Polevoi, MD; Susan Promes, MD; Craig San Luis
Department of Emergency Medicine

The Problem
As per national benchmarks, the throughput in our Emergency Department (ED) is too long. Additionally, increased length of stay in the ED is associated with decreased patient satisfaction. Room-to-exam time, the time from which a triaged patient actually sees a provider, was an average of 30 minutes for the 2011-2012 academic year.

Project Goal
We attempted to reduce the room-to-exam (RTE) time by 5 minutes (from 30 minutes to 25 minutes) for 3 out of 4 quarters of the 2011-2012 academic year.

Project Plan
- Identify hurdles preventing a decrease in RTE time by soliciting resident feedback
- Educate residents on the importance of patient satisfaction scores
- Change resident workflow by having senior residents assign patients, accurately documenting when a patient is actually seen, and encouraging a more efficient assessment of patients’ needs
- Provide monthly feedback via e-mail and individual incentive via gift cards

Results / Progress to Date
- We have exceeded our project goal for all 4 quarters, with an average RTE time of **18.4 minutes** for the academic year of 2011-2012.
- As per the most recent Press-Ganey data collection, our overall patient satisfaction scores and satisfaction with MDs is improving in conjunction with our decreased RTE times.

Lessons Learned
- An important aspect of quality improvement is making sure all providers and department participants have an aligned vision and incentive.
- Residents responded positively to receiving individualized feedback on their RTE times.
- Providing individual and group feedback and incentive can be very valuable in keeping progress on track.

Moving Forward
Our team plans to continue to track room-to-exam times with the goal of reducing wait times and throughput times even further. Other potential areas of improvement include improving patient satisfaction and ED workflow by reducing decision time to disposition (either admission or discharge).