

# Hospital Improves Diagnostics Registration Time, Satisfaction, and Productivity

## Outcomes

- The time to complete the entire process has gone from 17.8 minutes to an average of 7.8 minutes, **a 56% reduction.**
- The overall cost of registration per patient has dropped from an average of \$14.62 to \$12.61 per patient, **a 14% reduction in costs.**

First impression is a one time opportunity.

For most hospitals, the first impression a patient gets is from the registration or admissions office. Usually, the first step in the process is to wait in line to see a greeter or receptionist and then to be asked to wait again in the lobby until someone is available to meet with the patient. The wait time often increases anxiety and apprehension about the procedure the patient is about to receive. This in turn dramatically impacts patient satisfaction ratings.

## The Problem

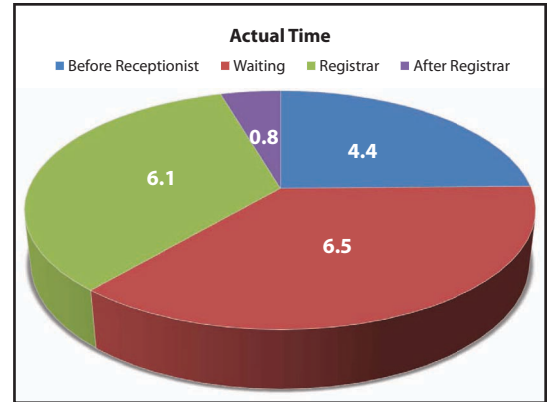
At a Tennessee medical center, the patient access staff was had a tremendous goal to accomplish. Total patient registration time for diagnostics was running around 17.8 minutes. It included the time the patient walked in the door until the Registrar completed entering information into the system. **The goal for the Patient Access staff was 7 minutes. This meant a 61% reduction in measured time.**

The staff decided to hold a Kaizen event to look at the entire registration process from the time a patient walked into the area until they left. A team was assembled comprised of clerks, registrars, receptionists, managers and team leaders.

## Observation and Mapping

The team met to begin mapping the Current State Value Stream for the process. The team chose to use observation forms to track the progression of patients through the series of processes that comprised the value stream. While some groups observed the patients, other groups observed the staff and recorded their steps and times in processes.

The results were not surprising. In addition to the 12.6 minutes on average each patient was spending in the measured portion of the value stream, there was an additional 5.2 minutes on average of unmeasured time spent waiting. 4.4 additional minutes on average was spent waiting to first meet the receptionist while there was



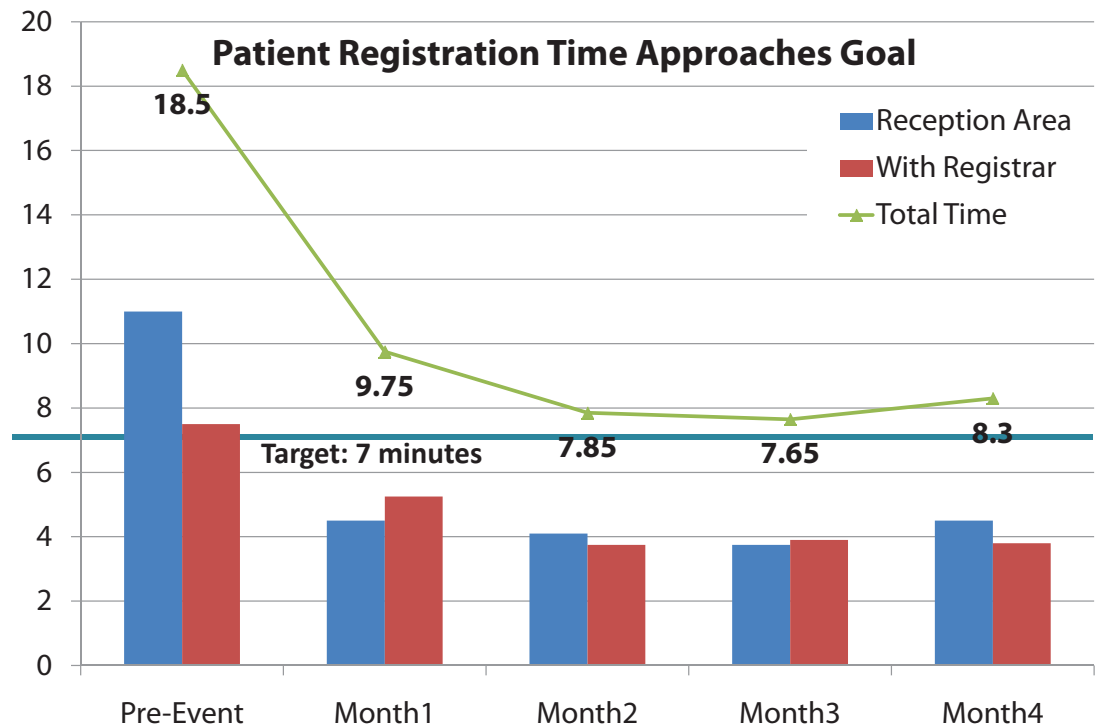
another 0.8 minutes spent waiting to receive forms and information from the Registrar after completing the data entry into the system.

The team's analysis revealed several process steps involving the patient waiting while the receptionist or registrar was busy doing another task. Many of the team members said that the wait was necessary because the staff were constantly in motion trying to determine who or what was to be done next. Since the direction from management was clear — obtain the goal without adding staff — the team began to reexamine the observation sheets. Slowly, the solutions became more apparent.

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## The Solutions

First, the bottle neck waiting on the receptionist was forming from the receptionist having to get up and leave the station. This was caused by two major contributors. One was that the copier for insurance cards and other patient information was out of reach of the receptionist. The solution was to place a desktop copier in arm's length of the station.



The second major contributor was that the receptionist had to look for an open registrar's station. The registrars were not in direct sight of the receptionist. One of the team members from another area suggested that the registrars and receptionist use a tool already in place — the built-in teleconferencing system. This turned out to be an ideal solution for the receptionist. It would eliminate having to leave the workstation while patients were waiting in line. The receptionist could always be available to greet patients and get their actual arrival times into the system for monitoring.

Registrars had scripted screens to prompt them through the series of questions. However, most of the registrars would wait until they had completed the questions in the system to begin printing the patient forms. By standardizing the steps of work, registrars began the printing and assembly of forms while other scripted questions were still being entered into the system.

### Outcomes

Overall, the event has shown to be extremely successful. The Patient Access team is now capturing a more meaningful metric of the total time a patient is in the area. The time to complete the entire process has gone from an actual observed

time of 17.8 minutes to an average of 7.8 minutes. That is a 56% reduction. As an additional measure of success, the staff is very happy with the improvements and now seeks further gains through continuous improvement ideas.

**The overall cost of registration per patient has dropped from an average of \$14.62 to \$12.61 per patient, a 14% reduction in costs.**

An additional benefit that was not the focus of the event was productivity. The team has found that by tracking the metrics and matching them with the financials, the overall cost of registration per patient has dropped from an average of \$14.62 to \$12.61 per patient, a 14% reduction in costs.

While most solutions were implemented immediately, a number of other solutions involving new equipment were noted that could potentially reduce the total time to **5.4 minutes**.