

Hospital Name:
Scottsdale Healthcare

Address:
Osborn Campus
7400 E. Osborn Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Contact:
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2006 ED Volume: 51,000
Growth from 2005: 2%
Total Staffed Hospital Beds: 337
Acute ED Beds: 42
Fast Track: Yes
Clinical Decision Unit: No

Problem to be Resolved:
Long wait times in the ED.

Key Words:
Average length of stay
Wait time

Lessons Learned:
Scottsdale Healthcare's leaders feel that telling patients what wait times look like at a given time, whether good or bad, is more useful than offering a wait time guarantee, which may be meaningless at times when it cannot be met.

Reason for Change:

Scottsdale Healthcare operates its three EDs in a state with some of the worst ED wait times in the nation. Scottsdale Healthcare did not want to contribute to these long waits; instead they sought to decrease waiting at each of their hospitals and highlight the fact that they could achieve such times when others in the state could not.

Implementation:

Scottsdale Healthcare began posting ED wait times on their website so that patients could be aware of these waits before coming to the ED. Specifically, the length of time that it takes to get a patient from the ED's front desk to an exam room at each of the system's three hospitals is updated online every ten minutes. The wait times come with a disclaimer saying that they are for informational purposes only, and offer no guarantee as to how long a patient can expect to wait once arriving at the ED.

Wait times for each of Scottsdale Healthcare's hospitals can be found at www.shc.org.

Results/Impact:

Although posting times online does not itself decrease wait times, it can indirectly help reduce waiting for a number of reasons. First of all, a patient may view wait times in order to decide which ED to visit; if there is no wait at the Osborn campus and a 62 minute wait at the Shea campus, the patient may choose to visit the Osborn campus and thus not add to the crowding that is leading to long waits at Shea. Additionally, simply reporting on a problem is often a strong motivator for change, as there is greater awareness of the extent of the problem and a greater desire to improve the data that is reported to the public. Scottsdale Healthcare recognizes that there is always room for improvement, and regularly works to refine processes in order to continue to see decreases in patient wait times.

According to a 2007 study by Press Ganey Associates, Scottsdale Healthcare had lower average wait times in the ED than both the state and national averages. Scottsdale Healthcare's three hospitals have an average length of stay of about 3 hours, compared with 5 hours and 37 minutes for Arizona and 4 hours nationally.