



## Service Priorities and Programmes Electronic Presentations

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### **Shorten the Queue – A Win-Win Way to Go**

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#### **Introduction**

Oncology patients attending scheduled out-patient clinic (OPD) appointments often have to wait for a long time before they are seen by doctors. Long queuing time not only causes patient and carer dissatisfaction, but also creates working stresses to all clinical staff at Oncology OPD. It is suspected that the long queuing time is at least partly due to inappropriately scheduling of the appointment time slots.

#### **Objectives**

To shorten patients' queuing time for OPD consultation in the Department of Clinical Oncology, Prince of Wales Hospital.

#### **Methodology**

We selected one of the busiest clinics, the Breast Clinic, as the target for improvement.

1. Queuing time survey was performed for 3 consecutive weeks in August 2015.
2. Data captured including different time points along the journey of a OPD visit, including the scheduled appointment time, patient registration time, medical record ready time and doctor consultation time. The number of doctors available in the clinic were also captured every 30 minutes.
3. It was found that inappropriate scheduling of the appointment time slots was one of the major contributing factors to the long queuing time.
4. Appointment scheduling and quota for each time slot was redesigned to better streamline the patients.
5. Queuing time survey was repeated in 3 consecutive weeks in April 2016.

#### **Result**

Significant improvement in queuing time observed after new appointment scheduling:

1. Median queuing time reduced by 48% from 120 minutes to 62 minutes.
2. About half of patients queued less than or equal to 1 hour in the second survey.
3. Over 80% of patients queued less than 1.5 hours in the second survey.
4. Over 98% of patients queued less than 2 hours in the second survey.

5. Better matching between doctors' availability and appointment scheduling observed, patients came at different times had similar queuing time.

6. Feedback from clinic staff were positive and they reported less patients complaining about the long queue after improvement actions.

#### CONCLUSION

Significant improvement on queuing time can be achieved by detail data analysis and appropriate appointment scheduling. Shorter OPD queuing time not only improves patients and carer satisfaction, it also reduce the working stresses of the clinic staff.