

University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics (UW Health) Redesigns Specialty Care to Improve Patient Experience and Operations

Leaders at University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics (UW Health) sought to transform their ambulatory operations through a specialty care redesign initiative focused on improving patient access to care. Multidisciplinary teams, operational leaders and clinical support staff collaborated with Huron team members to enhance patient experience, increase operational efficiency, improve employee engagement and maximize financial performance.

Challenge

Limited first call resolution, long appointment wait times and operational fragmentation impeded access for patients and referring providers. UW Health patients encountered an average scheduling lag of 39 days for a new appointment, and scheduler turnover exceeded 22% annually.

In response to these issues, UW Health leaders sought to design and implement a patient-centric access operating model that was responsive to patient demand while being sensitive to clinicians' needs.

“We are changing the ambulatory care model and delivery process to ensure an exceptional patient experience that consistently provides timely access to care, as well as improved operational efficiency and clinical support allowing teams to function at their highest level of licensure. This work supports the care teams in delivering seamless, exceptional care with a focus on patients' needs beyond diagnosis and treatment.”

TERESA NEELY, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF AMBULATORY OFFICER, CHIEF NURSING OFFICER

Results

11-day reduction in average wait time for appointment

25% reduction of call abandonment rate

8% increase in net clinic revenue

15% increase in new patient visit volume

8% reduction in scheduler turnover

Approach

UW Health partnered with Huron to implement a multiyear specialty care redesign initiative, which supported UW Health's strategy to provide easy access to ambulatory services in order to deliver remarkable healthcare.

The project involved the following integrated workstreams: telecommunications optimization, scheduler centralization, coordinated scheduling, template optimization, pre-visit planning, records collection, registered nurse triage, provider electronic medical record (EMR) optimization and prior authorization.

Huron partnered with an ambulatory access team as well as multidisciplinary teams from 10 UW Health specialty care divisions to complete the initial phases of the initiative. All remaining specialties are scheduled for completion by 2023.

The teams collectively implemented all specialty care redesign workstreams in each division, with Huron leading support for the following areas:

Scheduling decision tree design and implementation.

Following the transformational vision and guidelines established by UW Health executive leadership, Huron worked with each specialty's clinical and operational leadership to design a scheduling platform that fit the needs of the providers, patients and staff — all while maximizing first call resolution. Capitalizing on electronic health record (EHR) functionality empowered staff to schedule across locations while ensuring patients were matched with the right provider for the right duration and at the right time. This work has set the foundation for future online self-scheduling and digital health initiatives.

Provider template optimization. UW Health established enterprisewide guiding principles for provider templates and contact hour expectations. Huron worked with each specialty's providers to design their template in line with the guiding principles, leveraging EHR functionality to increase access and maximize clinic flow.

Scheduling workforce alignment. The team developed a standardized staffing methodology, ensuring the scheduling workforce will remain adequately staffed to achieve their key performance indicator goals and exceed expectations of patients and families.

University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics (UW Health) is the preeminent academic health system in Wisconsin and nationally recognized for providing high-quality care to more than 600,000 patients each year. The healthcare system has more than 17,000 employees; 1,600 physicians; 87 outpatient clinics; and seven hospitals, including an academic health center, a children's hospital, a rehabilitation hospital, four community hospitals and five regional cancer centers.



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