

Using **Design Thinking** to Improve the Patient Waiting Experience

CHALLENGE:

Patients and families are spending a long time in overcrowded waiting rooms leading to low patient satisfaction.

INITIAL QUESTION:

How much larger should our waiting room be?

#9419

1 **Fact finding**

Collect data through various channels.

- **Patient surveys:**
The waiting room experience is uncomfortable. Patients feel anxious and consider leaving when wait times are long.
- **Quantitative data:**
Review appointment scheduling patterns, identify peak volume times, monitor how many friends and family members come with each patient and determine needed capacity based on current volumes.
- **Qualitative data:**
Patients arrive early for their appointments to complete paperwork, there are not enough chairs for family members and at peak appointment times the waiting room is very noisy.

2 **Assess the jobs to be done**

Reframe the question you should answer based on the facts you gathered.

NEW QUESTION:

How can we reduce the time that patients spend waiting and improve their experience up until they begin their visit/treatment?

3 **Identify opportunities**

Review the data, identify potential solutions and draw conclusions about what solutions could work.

- Review the data, explore how other businesses such as theme parks, restaurants and retailers manage their wait process, identify potential solutions and draw conclusions about what solutions could work.
- Implement online registration so patients can arrive closer to their appointment time.
- Offer patients alternatives to sitting in the waiting room:
 - Implement a text messaging system that notifies patients when their room is ready so they can sit in the lobby or cafeteria while waiting.
 - Send patients directly to open exam rooms.
- Create a better waiting room experience
 - Offer free wi-fi
 - Provide games and activities for children
 - Provide soft distractions (e.g. LED waterless waterfalls) and calming aromas.

4 **Prototype and learn**

Try new solutions and continually evaluate success.

- Pilot text messaging system that alerts patients when their room is ready.
- Improve preregistration and scheduling so patients can arrive closer to appointment time.
- Change workflow to "pull to full" so that when people arrive they're placed in exam rooms rather than the waiting room.

By addressing challenges using a design thinking framework, healthcare organizations can create innovative solutions for problems facing their organization today, meet the holistic needs of their patients and position themselves for future success.