

Northwestern Medicine Increases Patient Access Leading to Improved Patient Satisfaction

Huron engaged medical group leadership from two of Northwestern Medicine's (NM) medical groups to create and build a sustainable, scalable appointment scheduling process. The successful implementation led to increased capacity by 26 percent for new patients at Northwestern Medical Group (NMG) and by 16 percent at the Regional Medical Group (RMG). Improved capacity has led to improved patient satisfaction scores associated with ease of scheduling.

Challenge

Consumers want immediacy and convenience, yet this is often not their experience when they try to schedule an appointment with a healthcare provider. At NM long wait times for appointments, low firstcall resolutions for patient inquiries and difficulty scheduling appointments for those with referrals led to low patient satisfaction. To address these challenges, NM collaborated with Huron to create a leading practice, consumer-centric scheduling experience across the two medical groups.

Results

Increased patient satisfaction from the **25th** to **75th** percentile

Improved timeliness of appointment availability by **5-10%**

Increased new patient capacity by **26%** and first call resolution by **21%**

Approach

To make these changes, Huron collaborated with Northwestern Medicine leadership, providers and staff. During this process they:

Created a new scheduling platform. Huron designed and built a scheduling platform that fit the needs of both medical groups and benefited patients, providers, and staff.

“Huron transformed our patient scheduling experience and provided us with the tools to sustain this change.”

KALI ARDUINI, DIRECTOR, PROJECT ONE ADVISORY CHAIR - ACCESS

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Increased patient access. The redesign of scheduling protocols, operations and referral processes enabled cross-geographic and cross-specialty scheduling. Scheduling questionnaires helped better identify the right location, provider and time for each patient's appointment. This led to patients getting appointments sooner.

Maximized capacity. The redesigned automated scheduling protocols created a more efficient clinical flow by building in a framework for scheduling with advanced practice providers (APPs). This increased patient capacity at clinics by allowing APPs to practice at the top of their license.

Standardized processes. The creation of systemwide definitions for patient populations ensured consistency in scheduling and patient experience.

Engaged stakeholders. Huron's employees collaborated with 40 specialties and worked alongside clinic staff and providers to implement the new scheduling platform. Huron also partnered with the medical group leadership to create a governance structure ensuring consistent implementation as new practices join the organization. This included support and training of the technology team.

Developed a data-driven approach. Reliable reporting for the scheduling platform, patient access and call center were created to support sustainability. Historic scheduling data was used to redesign provider schedules to meet patient volumes, access goals and utilization targets.

Northwestern Medicine is an award-winning integrated healthcare system that brings together physicians and researchers to provide high-quality care across Chicagoland. The healthcare system has 30,000 employees, 4,000 physicians, 200 locations an academic medical center, a rehabilitation hospital and five community hospitals.



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