

Press Release

Arrowhead Regional Medical Center creates ED model that reduces wait times and increases patient satisfaction

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It's not a stretch of the imagination to state that Arrowhead Regional Medical Center's new patient flow system represents the next great leap in performance standards for today's ED operations.

Arrowhead, located in Colton, California, has experienced more than a 100% increase in emergency room visits since 2002 – with the ED now receiving close to 120,000 visits per year. Even with this significant influx of traffic, the Medical Center's new patient flow system has dramatically reduced wait times for thousands of patients who rely on the county hospital for their emergency health services.

How dramatic? In March, the first full month after the system was implemented, average wait times were down to 29 minutes. In April and May, the average wait time was lowered to 24 minutes. Additionally, the number of patients who leave the hospital without having been tended to was also reduced.

San Bernardino County Grand Jury commends new system

Arrowhead's new system has certainly begun to attract notice. It recently drew high praise from the San Bernardino County grand jury in its report released in early July. The report states: "The overcrowding issue, thought to be critical, is being resolved with a well-thought-out and implemented plan."

New registration process enables greater ED performance

At the heart of the new approach is the improved registration system.

Instead of patients waiting in the lobby for registration, triage and medical assistance, the new system provides an experienced nurse who focuses on greeting and assessing patients prior to registration. This allows patients to be seen almost immediately upon arrival, with the care providers coming into the waiting room addressing patients.

Typically, the triage nurse will bring the patient into a cubicle where the assessment process is completed and a medical provider performs a screening exam. The patient is then treated as appropriate and discharged.

For more serious injuries or illnesses, patients are placed into a bed immediately for further assessment and treatment.

Patient satisfaction grows as wait times shrink

The best way to ensure that a new system is working is to hear actual patient feedback. Patients have been on record offering positive feedback relating to the new ED system. “The communication between Emergency Department and the clientele that comes through has improved immensely,” said Kelly Bernatene, emergency room nurse manager who played a key role in implementing the new system. “There’s much more dignity given to our patients and the way they’re put through the system.”

At Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, the future is now. Under the positive leadership of Medical Director Dr. Rod Borger, they are an example of how dedicated leadership and staff have collaborated to consistently provide the best in physician, nurse, and hospital administration that enhances the patient experience.