

Share & Learn: Helping patients to access care

Improving wait times on the phone

May 17, 2022



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.



Share & Learn: Helping patients to access care

Improving wait times on the phone

Presenters:

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre

- **Dr. Melissa Witty**, Family Physician, Barrie and Community Family Health Team, Barrie, ON
- **Dr. Lynda Ekeh**, Family Physician, Barrie and Community Family Health Team, Barrie, ON

St. Michael's Hospital

- **Dr. Noor Ramji**, Family Physician, St. Michael's Academic Family Health Team, Toronto, ON
- **Mr. Mo Alhaj**, Quality Improvement Specialist, St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto, ON

Moderators:

Dr. Debbie Elman, Family Physician, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre & **Dr. Erica Li**, Family Physician, Michael Garron Hospital



Disclosures

Name: Dr. Melissa Witty

- **Relationships with financial sponsors:** None
 - **Grants/Research Support:** N/A
 - **Speakers Bureau/Honoraria:** N/A
 - **Other:** N/A

Name: Dr. Lynda Ekeh

- **Relationships with financial sponsors:** None
 - **Grants/Research Support:** N/A
 - **Speakers Bureau/Honoraria:** N/A
 - **Other:** N/A



Disclosures

Name: Dr. Noor Ramji

- **Relationships with financial sponsors:**
 - **Grants/Research Support:** N/A
 - **Speakers Bureau/Honoraria:** N/A
 - **Other:** Stipend for QSC Directorship provided by DFCM, University of Toronto

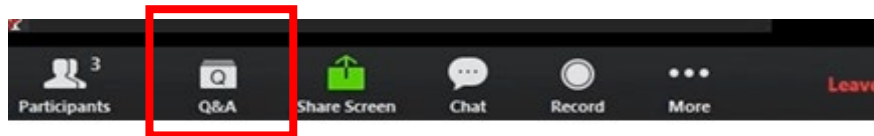
Name: Mr. Mo Al-Haj

- **Relationships with financial sponsors:**
 - **Grants/Research Support:** N/A
 - **Speakers Bureau/Honoraria:** N/A
 - **Other:** QIDDS salary provided by St Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team and Ministry of Health of Ontario

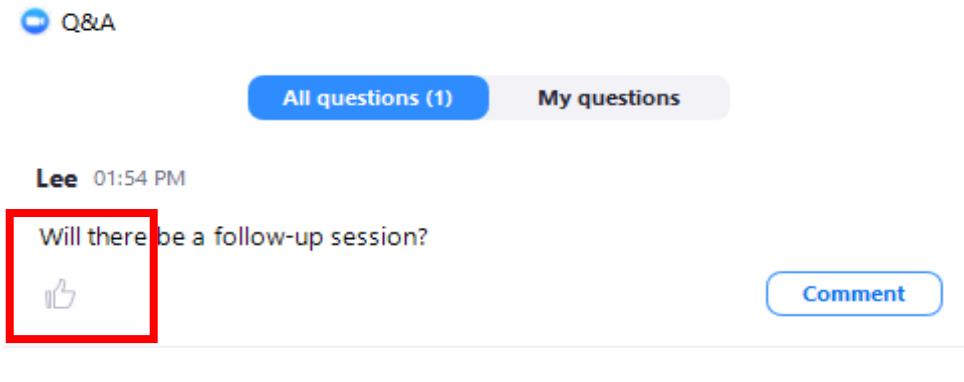


How to participate

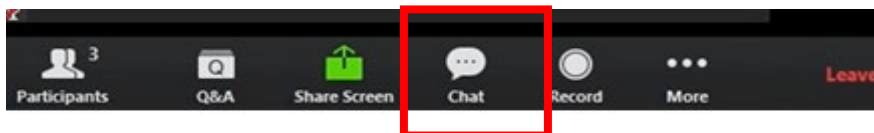
- All questions should be asked using the Q&A function at the bottom of your screen.



- Press the thumbs up button to upvote another guests questions. Upvote a question if you want to ask a similar question or want to see a guest's question go to the top and catch the panels attention.



- Please use the chat box for networking purposes only.



Reminder: this session is being recorded and will be available along with the slides at <https://dfcm.utoronto.ca/share-learn>

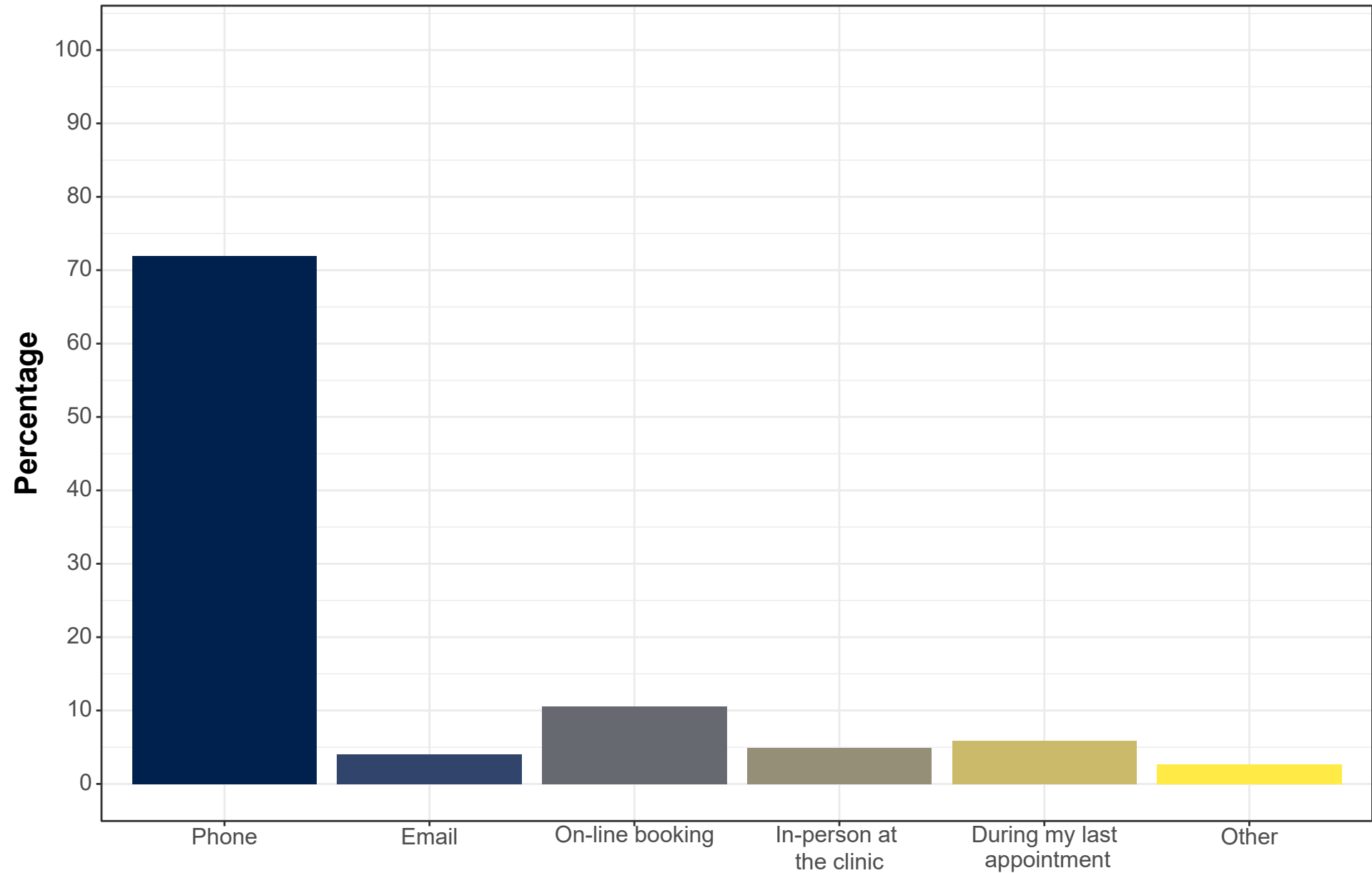
Background

- Common patient experience survey across DFCM
- Wave 5 surveys were sent between Nov 2021 and Feb 2022 at 13 of the core DFCM teaching sites
- Survey emailed to all patients with an email on file and a birthday in May, June, July, August, September, and October

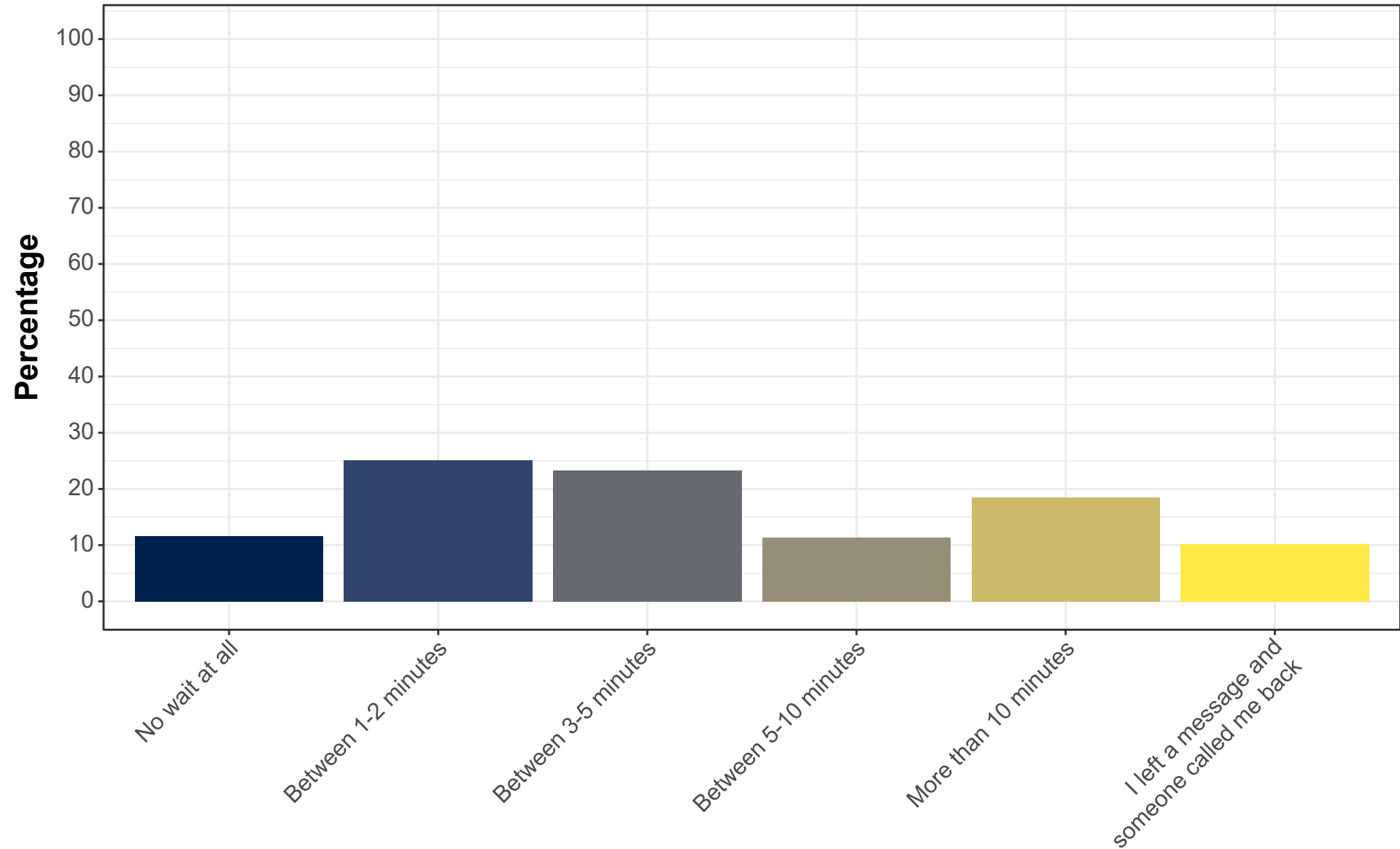


How did you book your most recent appointment? Note: Not all of these methods may be available at our practice.

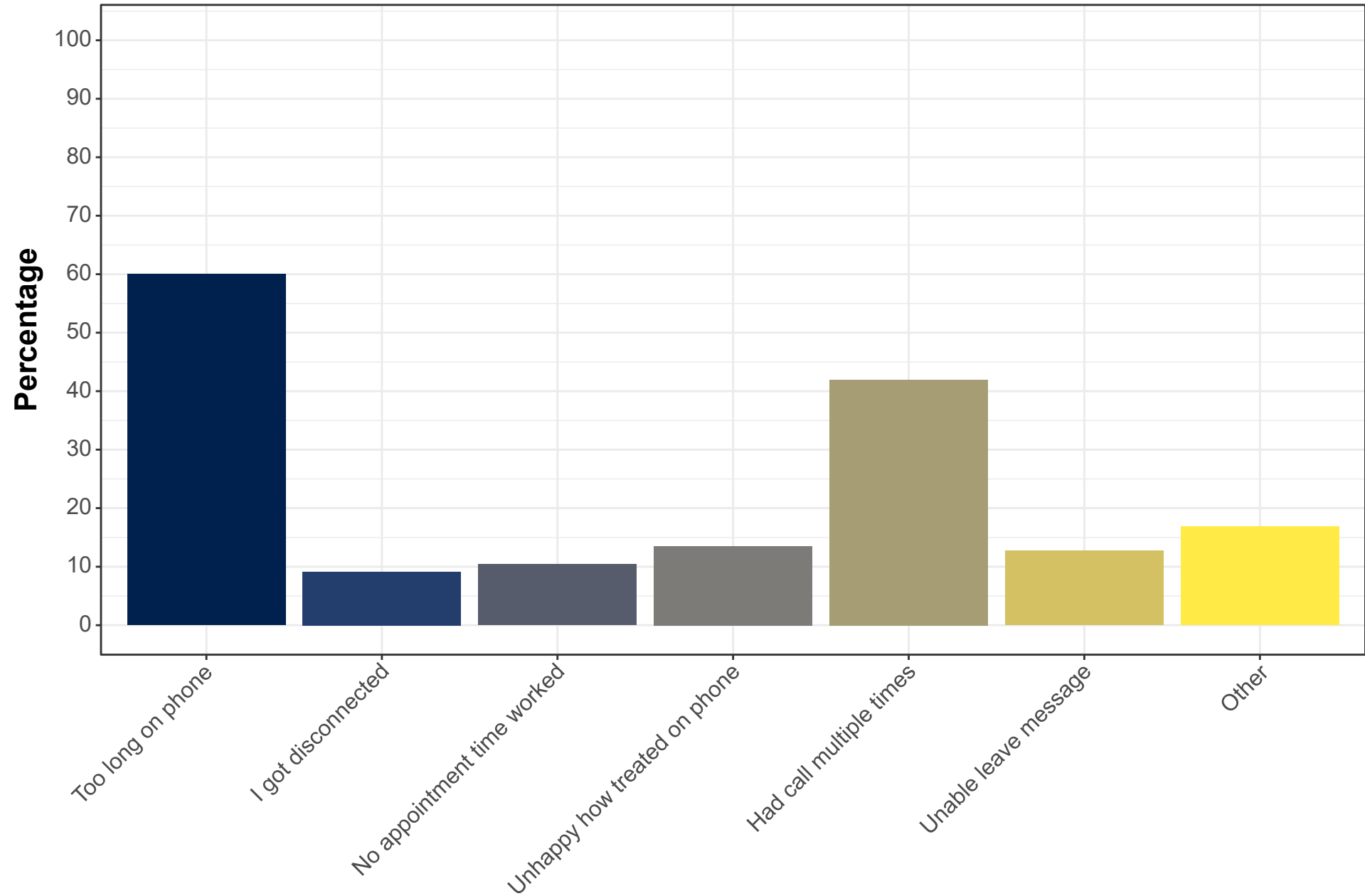
N=11960



**When you called [CLINIC] to book your appointment by phone, how long did you wait before being able to speak to someone who could book your appointment?
N=8337**



Why did you rate your last booking experience as fair or poor? N=1504



Share & Learn

- Shared improvement initiative presented by the QPC
- Exploring how different teams have approached improving wait times on the phone
 - What interventions have been tried? What happened? What can we learn?

The Barrie FMTU at RVH

- The Barrie FMTU at RVH is one of approx. 80 practices in Barrie that are part of the Barrie and Community Family Health Team, a non academic FHT
- Our team is composed of 6 Staff physicians running full time clinics and 18 residents with 1.5 FTE NP, 3 full time RNs, 1 part time RN and 4 admin staff
- We care for approx. 10,000 patients. 3500 are in resident practices



Barrie FMTU – who is on the phone?

- All FHT programs are off site and thus appointment bookings for our FHT programs are not done through our FMTU staff
- Admin staff book patient appointments for the resident physicians, staff physicians, NPs and RN visits
- RNs do telephone assessments; triage patients for appointments & communicate tests results/management plans
- Our after hours coverage/clinic is not onsite and run by our Barrie and Community Family Medicine Clinics



Barrie FMTU -QI Infrastructure

- QI in the Barrie FMTU is lead primarily by the QI program co-directors
- There is no formal QI committee
- No dedicated QI supports from the BCFHT and our work is independent from the QI work done at RVH (hospital)
- BCFHT QIDS provides support as needed to access data and participate in QI work e.g. PEM and learning collaboratives

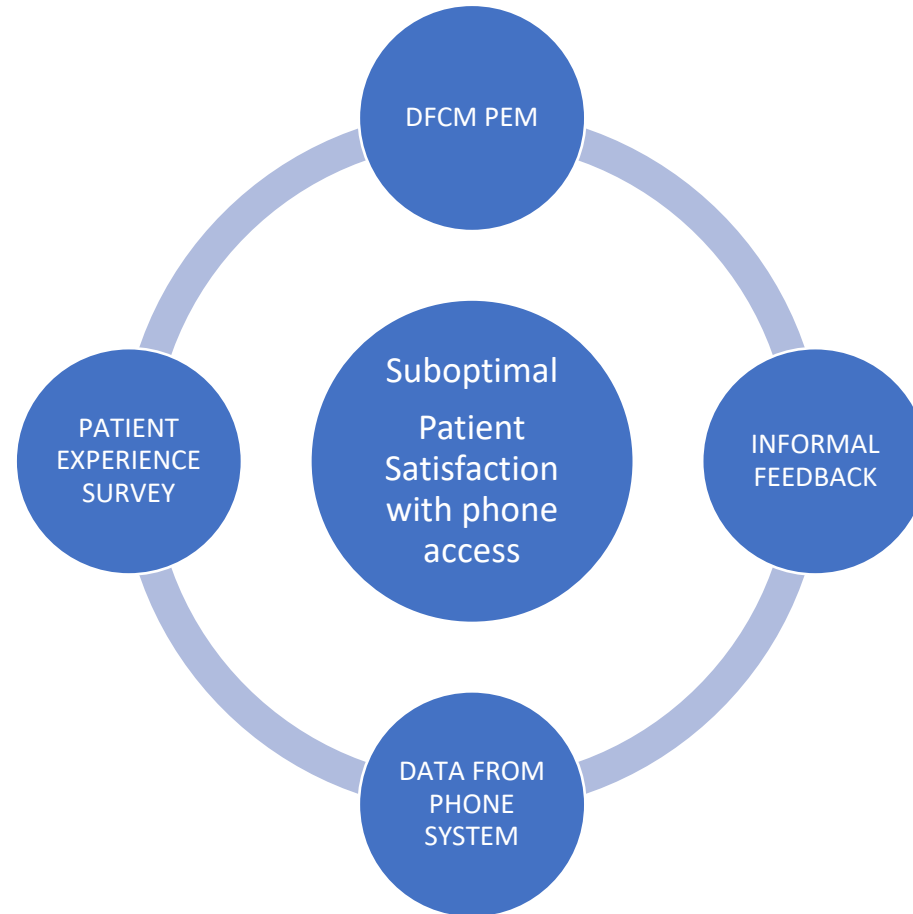


What problem were we addressing?

Suboptimal Patient Satisfaction with Phone Access

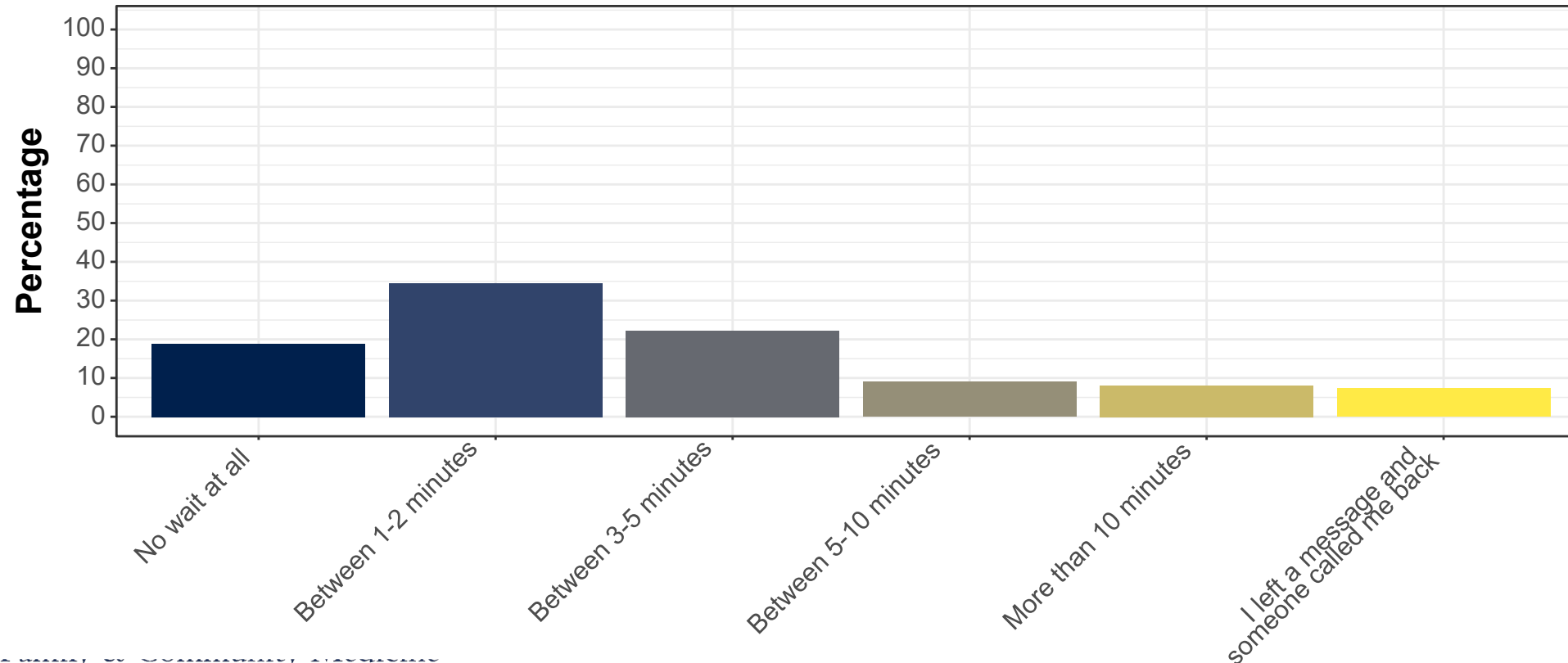


What problem were we addressing?



What problem were we addressing?

When you called [CLINIC] to book your appointment by phone, how long did you wait before being able to speak to someone who could book your appointment?
N=557

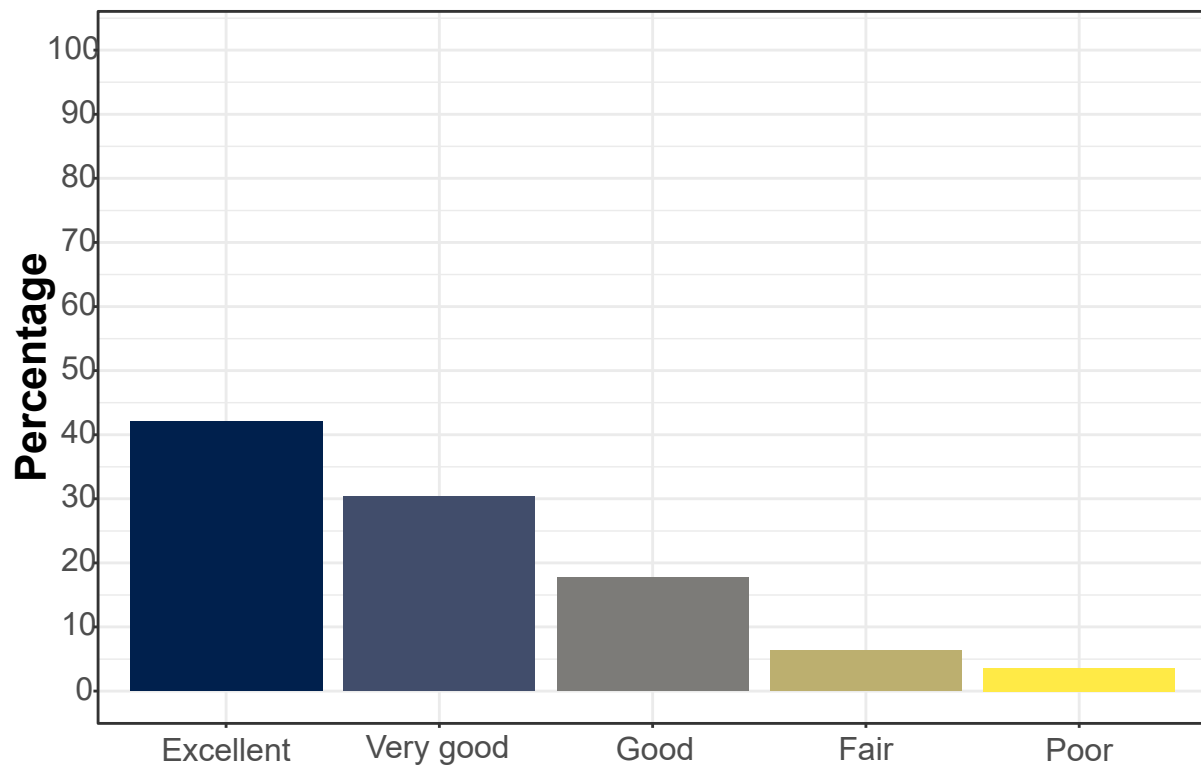


DFCM
Patient
Experience
Measures
Wave 05
(Nov 2021 -
Feb 2022)

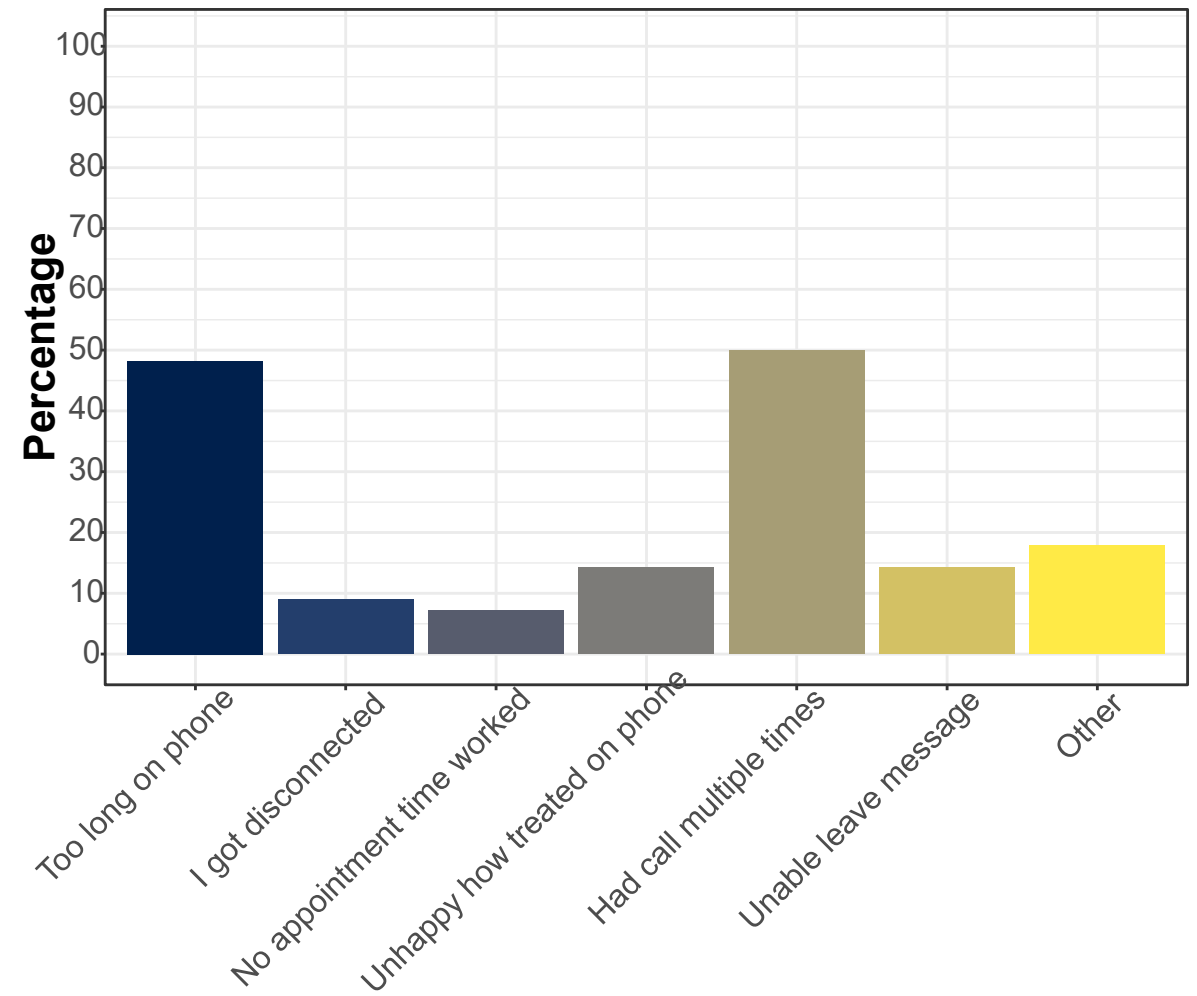


What problem were we addressing?

How would you rate your overall experience when last Booking your appointment over the phone?
N=557



Why did you rate your last booking experience as fair or poor?
N=56



What changes did you try?

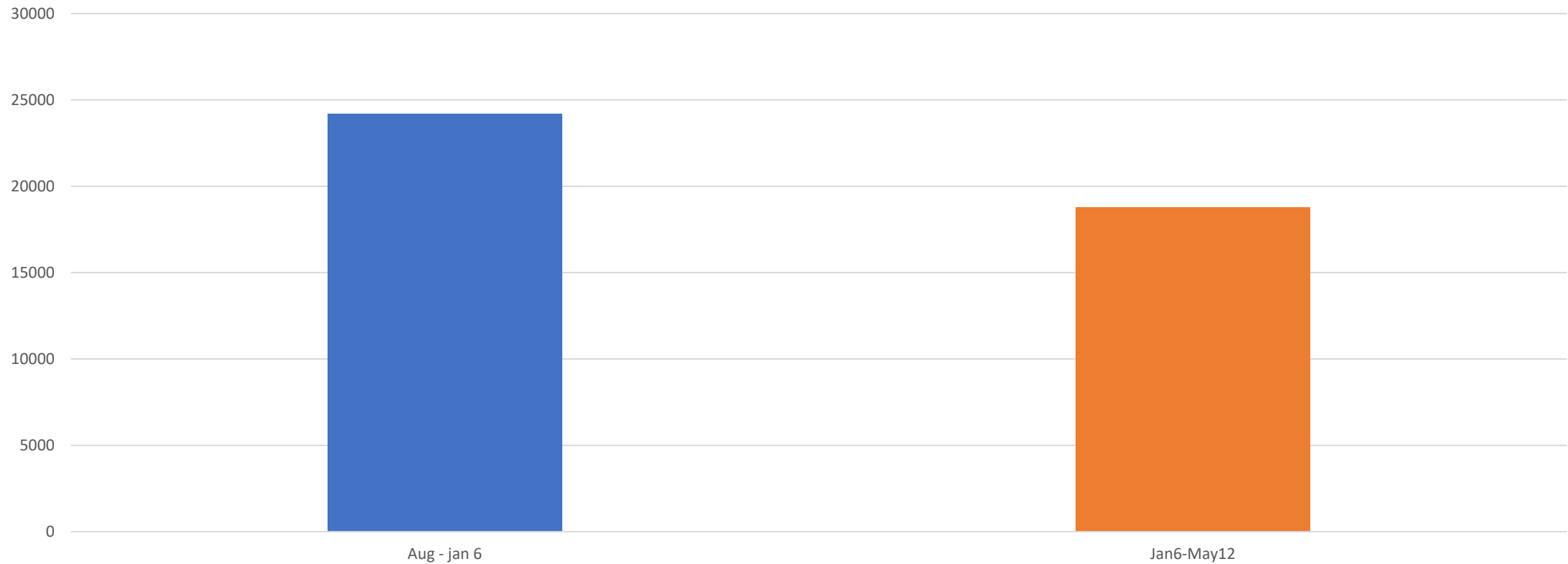
Advocated for removal of **eprescribe** tool in EMR:

- Identified that eprescribe tool in QHR/ Accuro was not functioning as it was intended and thus, we collaborated with other offices and advocated for removal of this tool
- Inadvertent discovery by patient safety committee while processing mapping: *Requests for Medication Renewals* was that our admin and nursing staff spend an inordinate amount of time on phone discussing prescription renewals



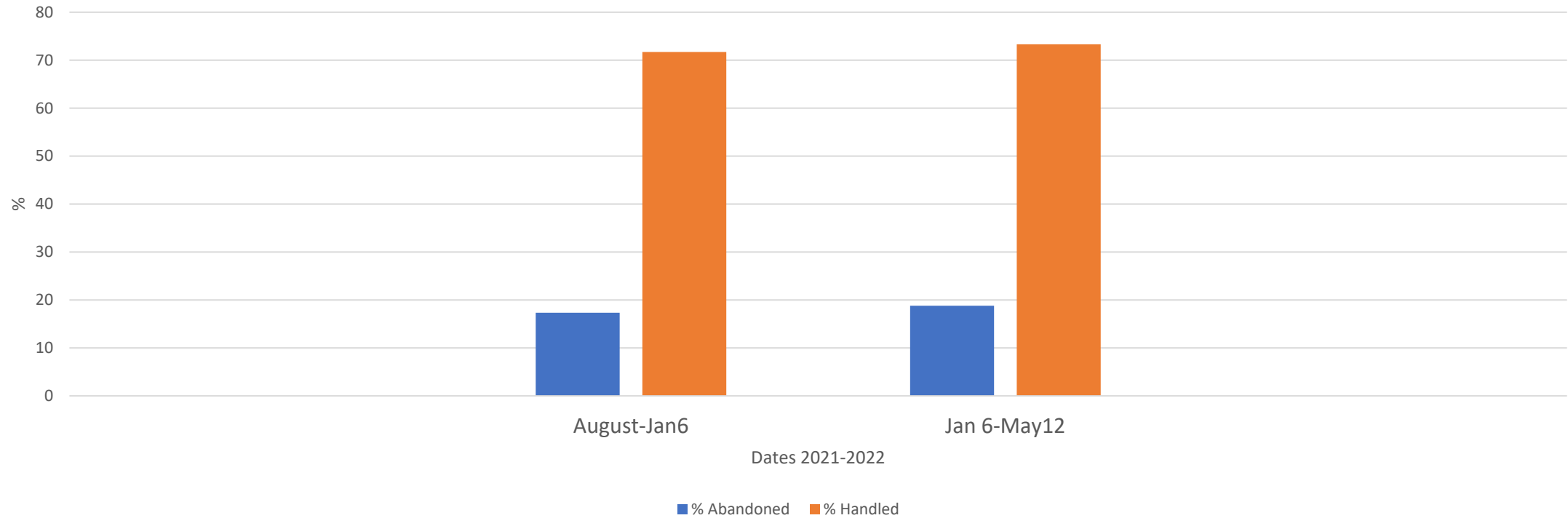
What happened?

Phone Traffic Before & After Discontinuing E-Prescribe



What happened?

Phone Traffic Before & After Discontinuing E-Prescribe



What happened?

- MDs report lesser requests to resend prescriptions that were already sent via ePrescribe
- Nursing and admin report fewer calls from pharmacy and patients asking for Rx renewals that show already renewed in EMR and electronically sent
- Decreased calls presented
- ? Any change in number of outgoing calls – need this data



Next Steps

1. Implement an online booking tool- pending start date June 1 ...
2. Continue to explore the content of phone activity to determine how to improve other workflows that will impact availability of staff to answer phones in timely manner
3. Train staff to pull informative data from our new phone system
4. Continue to review phone traffic data at regular intervals
5. Await results of DFCM PEM wave 6 survey



What did you learn in the process?

- Importance of exploring all stakeholder perspectives on workflow processes
- Electronic process, like *eprescribe*, can have both positive and negative impacts
- Phone traffic in our primary care office is very **complex**



Thank you!
Questions?

- Dr. Melissa Witty
wittym65@gmail.com
- Dr. Lynda Ekeh
ekehl@rvh.on.ca



Context/Culture - SMH

Who are we (current as of 2022)?

Our Current Staff



266
Staff



80
Physicians

43.6 FTE



38
Resident Physicians



38
Nurses

23.7 FTE



7
NPs

6.1 FTE



56
Clerical Staff

39.6 FTE



28
Health Disciplines

22.9 FTE



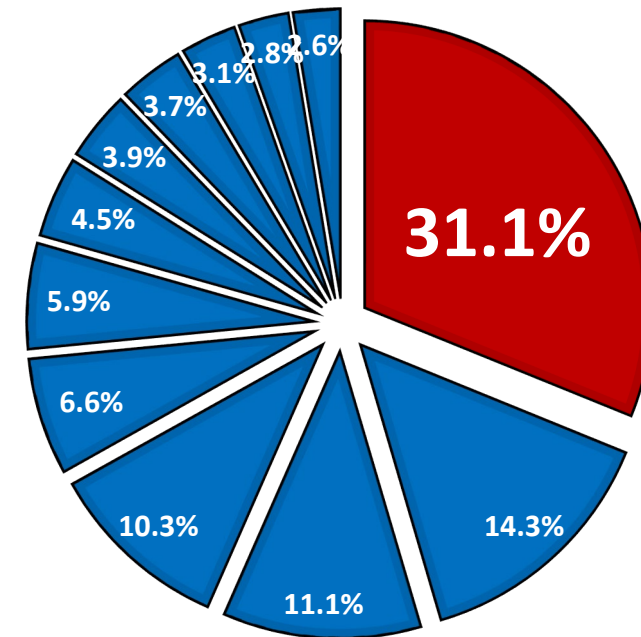
19
Non-clinical

18 FTE

What problem were you addressing?

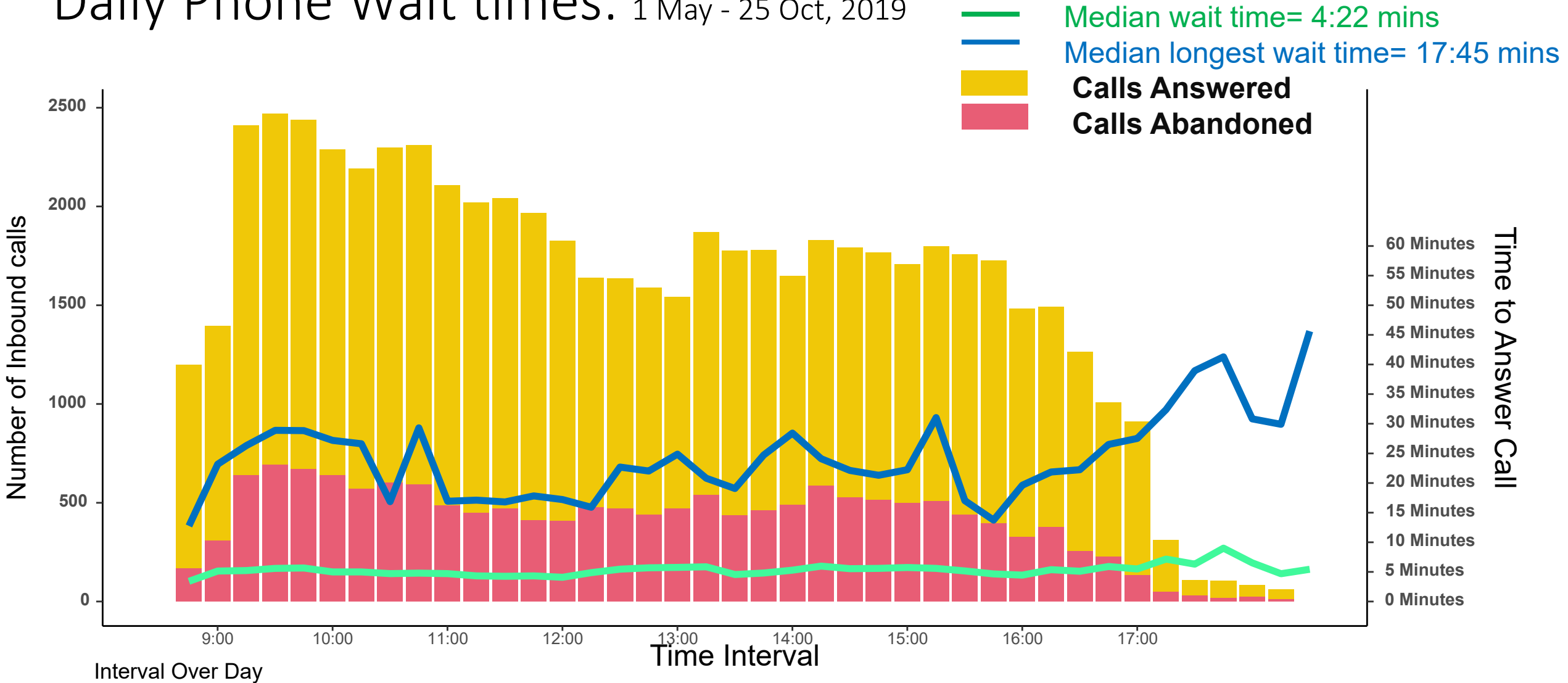
Unsatisfactory experience with the call center where patients stated that they experienced:

1. Lengthy wait times
2. Extended on-hold times
3. Complicated pathways involving multiple transfers to reach a staff member able to resolve their inquiry.
4. Patients abandon their calls before receiving an answer.



What problem were you addressing?

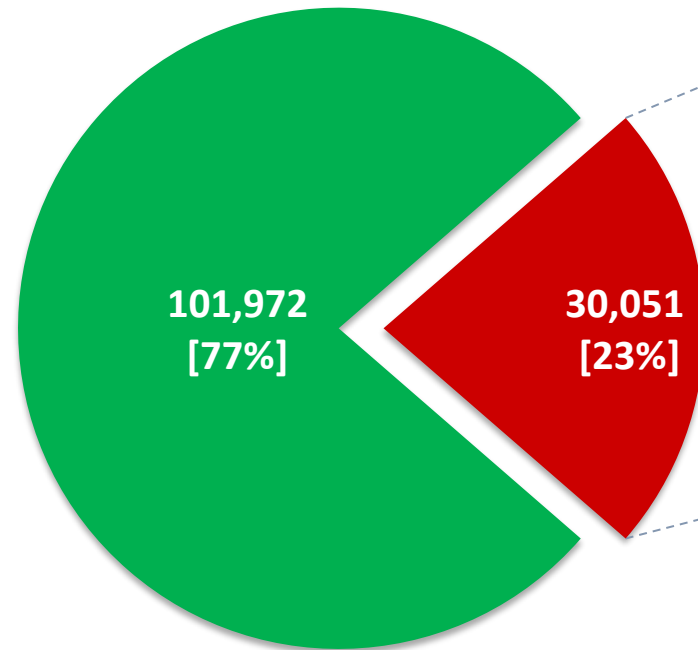
Daily Phone Wait times: 1 May - 25 Oct, 2019



What problem were you addressing?

Abandoned Calls: 1 May - 25 Oct, 2019

Total inbound calls = 132,023



N= 30,501 calls

Median= 6.57 mins

Mean= 8.24 mins

10th Percentile:
1.58 mins

■ Answered

■ Abandoned



Understanding the Problem

Timely & Patient Centered Response to Patient Phone Inquiry



```
graph TD; A[Timely & Patient Centered Response to Patient Phone Inquiry] --> B[Demand  
# of Patients calling]; A --> C[Supply  
# of Calls that can be answered]; A --> D[Phone System Operations];
```

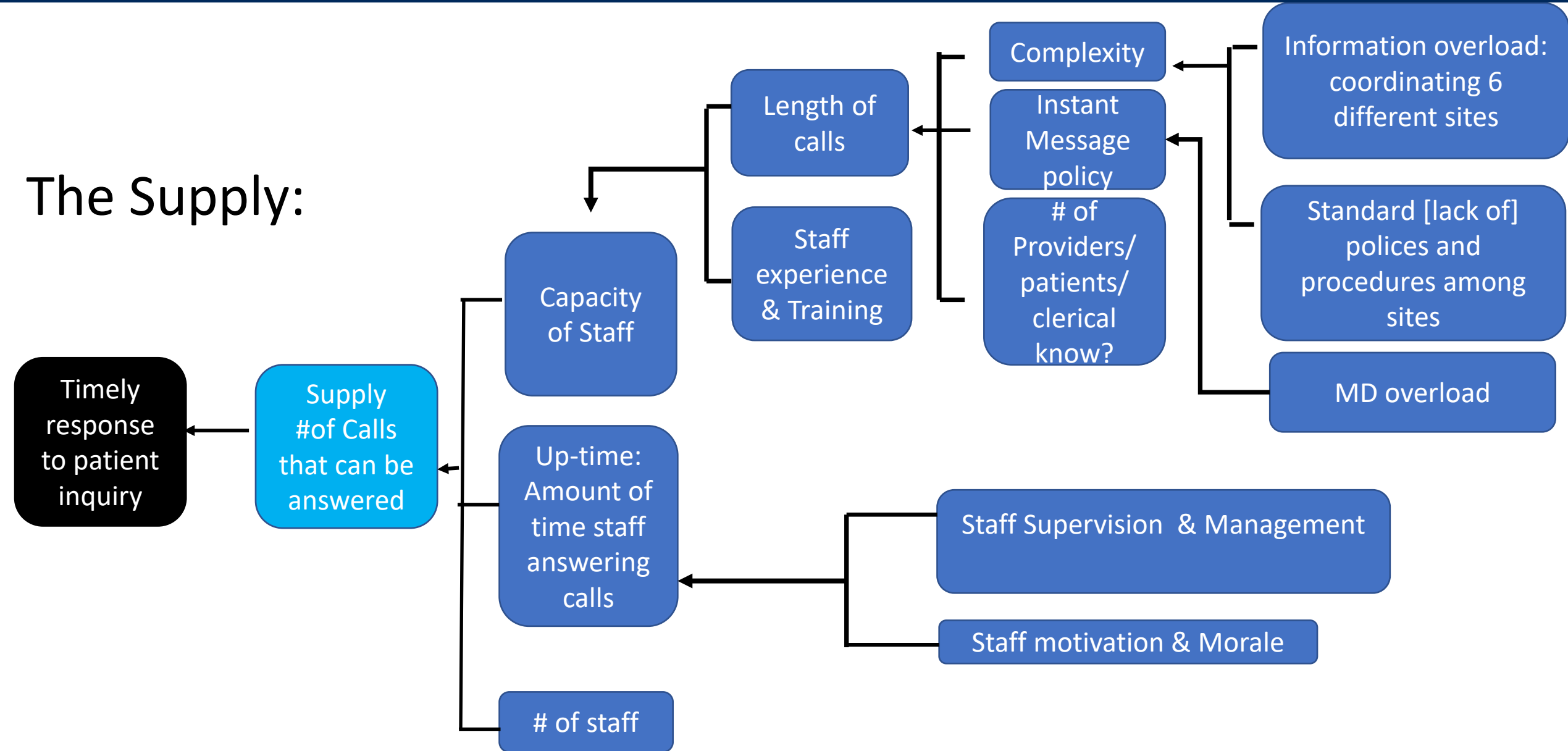
Demand
of Patients
calling

Supply
of Calls that can be
answered

**Phone System
Operations**

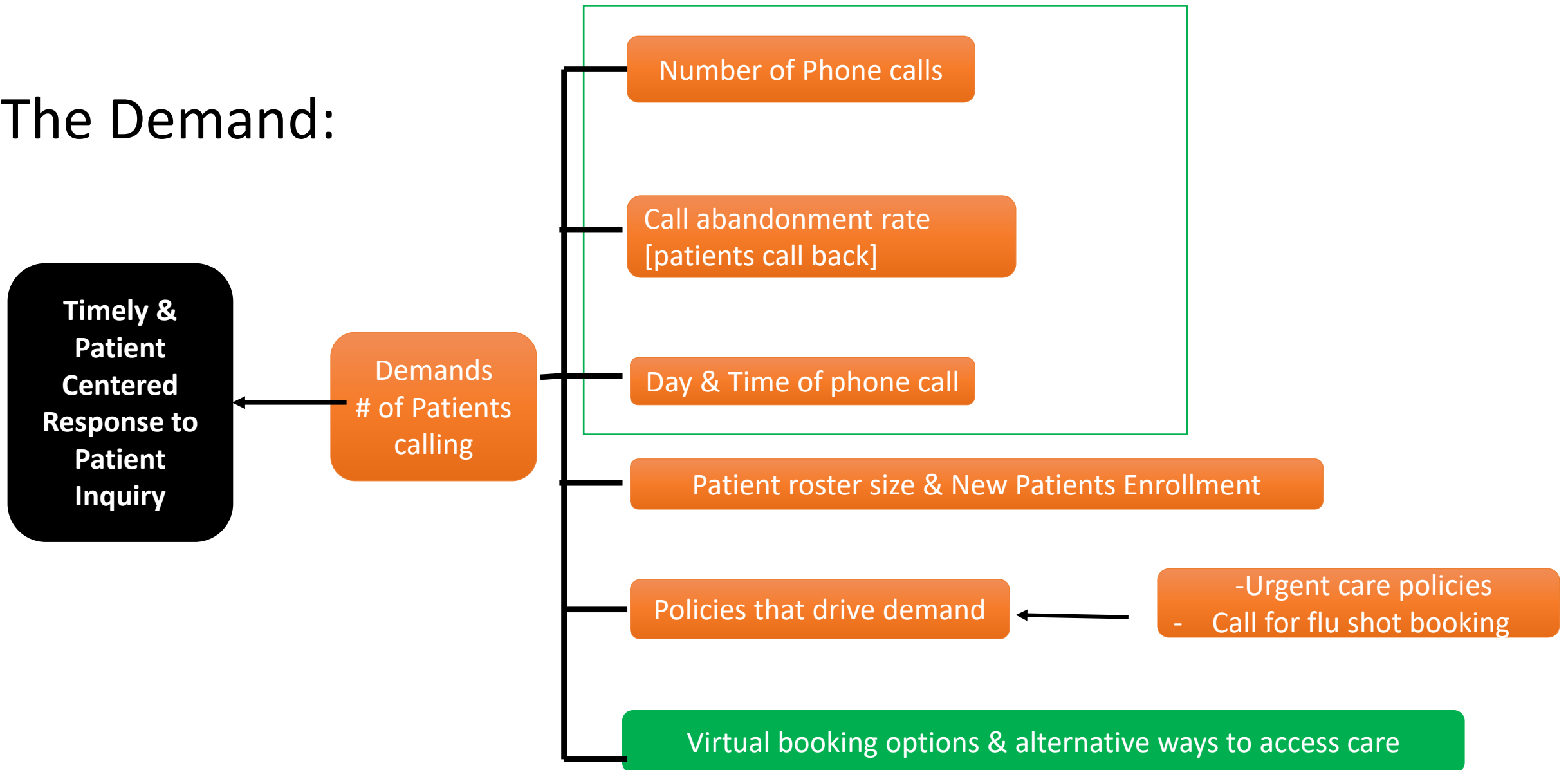
Understanding the Problem

The Supply:



Understanding the Problem

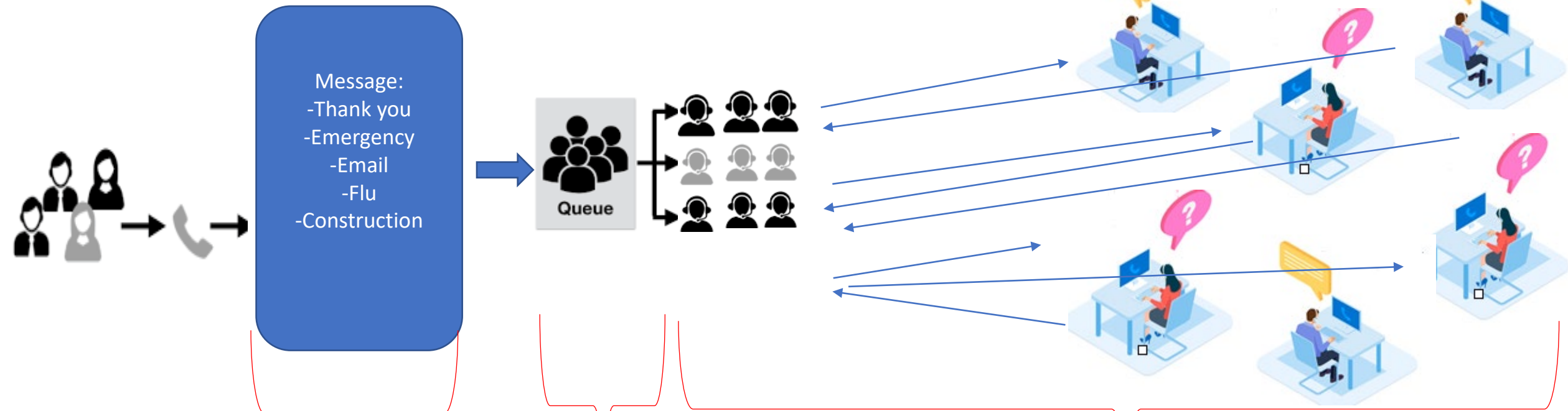
The Demand:



Understanding the Problem

Phone System Operations

Coordination with Sites



Message length
1:26 mins

Median Wait time
4:22 mins

Alerting + Handling + Holding + Wrapping =
Average call length 2:00 mins

Understanding the Problem

Phone System Operation: Work Station

Patient Affairs → 5215
Direct Switchboard: Ex 5431
Health Records SMH → 416-864-5218
Focus Team: 3095.

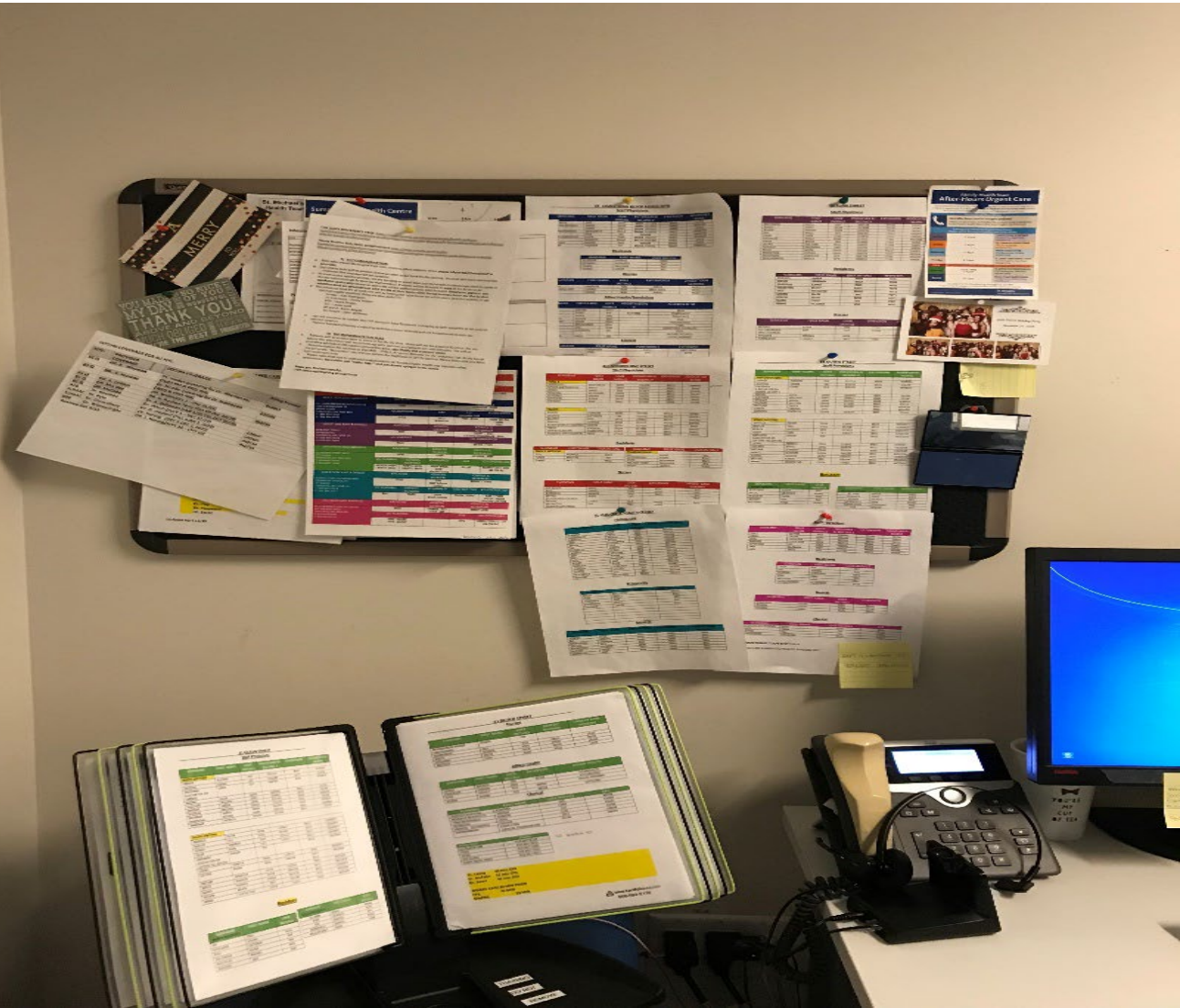
Financial Workshop
Madeline Bondy Ex: 77035.
HIV & Transcare - Pegi Ex: 8340
Paula - 76854
Celia (SW) - 77273.
Chloe (IS) - 76806
Alyssa (IS) - 77174
Legal clinic @ 80 Bond
sheleca - 3005 (Ass)
Jennifer Stone - 77235 (Lawyer)
Dental clinic @ 80 Bond
PH: 416-338-0905.

Referrals/Specialists
410 + STJ - Christine Ex 8346
80 Bond/STL - Mary: Ex 6240
80 Bond (programs) Julianne Ex 3004
61 Queen - Sharon Ex 3699.
Sumac - Jackie Ex 76805
Sumac - (Programs) Maria Ex 76848
Lisa Rubial (Addictions Counsellor)
Ex: 6853 *CP# 416-209-4268*
X-Ray/U/S (Sumac) Gordon Ex 76840

Release of Information:
Mustafa Ex: 76804
Linda Ex 76978
Michelle - Ex: 48383
(Dr. Schirallist only)
Film Library Ex: 5662.
CCAC - 410 - 905-283-3520
- 416-217-3820
Alison Berlin (IS) 48023
Dr. J. Simpson ↓
Albany Clinic - 807 Broadview Ave 416-461-9471 x2610

Immunizations
2,4,6,12,15,18 (Months) ← Roar.
4,12,13,14 (YRS).
Alida (NP) - Jill NP Student.
Katie Sussman - Ex 8305.
Marija - Ex: 48304
* Health Care Connect: 1-800-445-1822*
STL - Suture Removal to be booked with MRP.

Dr. Windrum OK to double book children if Sick & Need to be fit in.
* Dr. Vasa's pts Calling - IM should go to her to take call if returning her Call*
TRACY BOOKS FOR:
→ DR. SHIN, DR. MCINERNEY, DR. KAWDEL, DR. SHAN, DR. DA SILVA.
NATALIA BOOKS FOR:
→ AMP/SUP CLINIC, DR. YOUNG, DR. COHEN-SILVER, DR. FREEMAN, DR. MIN HAS.
* 82 - Unblock private



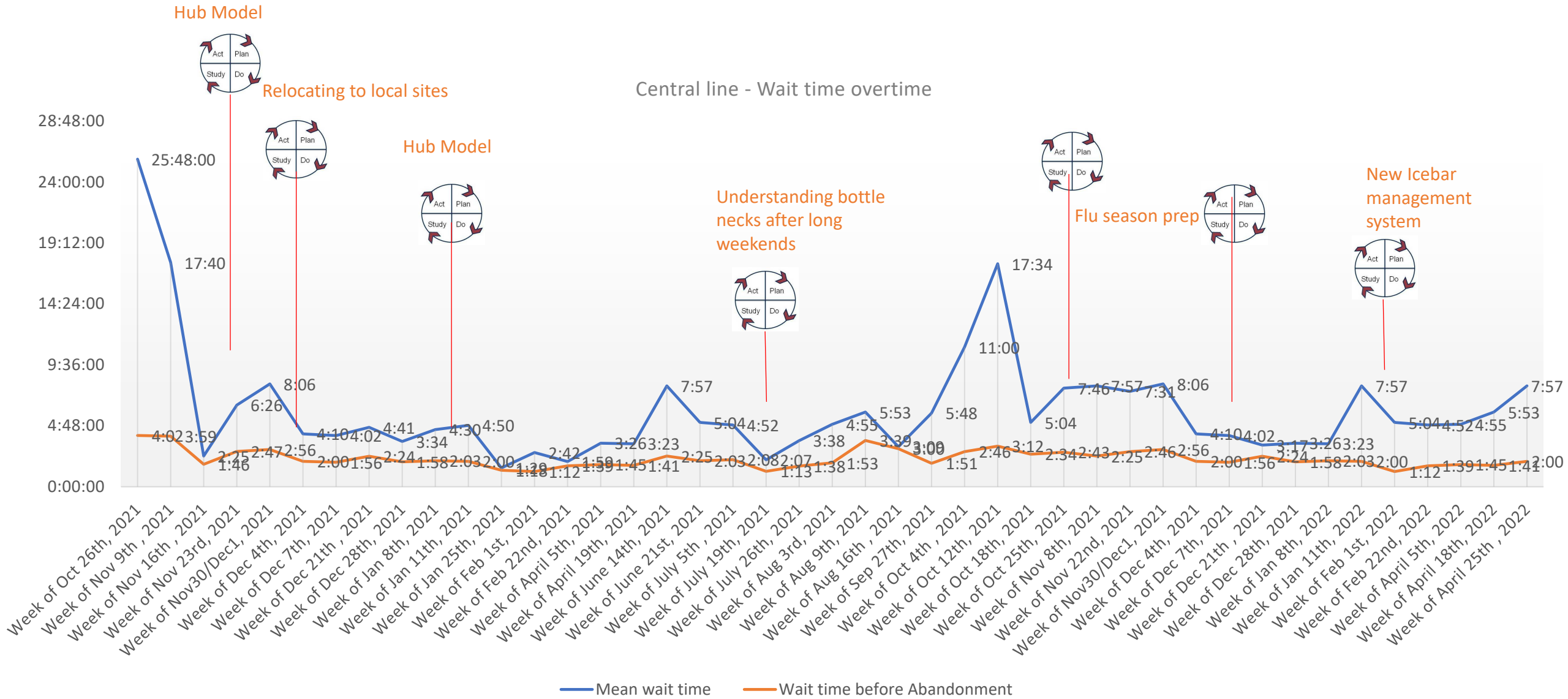
What changes did you try?

1. Weekly tracking and continuous data feedback to the phone center staff, clerical coordinators and leadership
2. Understanding the reasons of why our patients call the phone center
3. Identifying the bottle necks and high demand times and resource accordingly
4. Registration staff supporting phone staff temporarily logging on when volumes are high (Ask for Help)
5. Work hours were modified to address end of the day telephone call pressures
6. Creating hub model [Central and East] hubs
7. Identifying call volumes trends [higher call volume after long weekend]
8. Relocating staff to be embedded in local sites
9. Calculating the right ratio of staff to phone calls
10. Clerical coordinators having live data through Icebar Manager which provide live data on call wait times and staff activity
11. Offering appointments booking through FHTbookings@smh.ca
12. Creating an online booking system



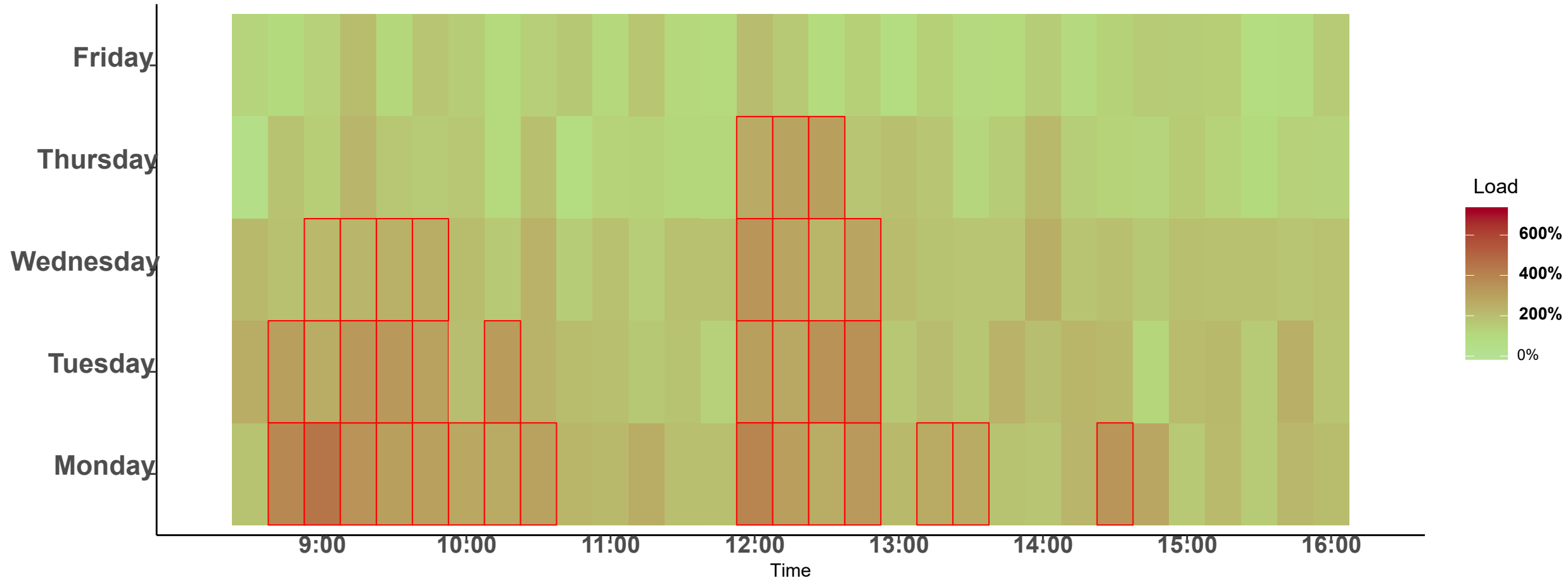
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- Weekly tracking and continuous data feedback to the phone center staff, clerical coordinators and leadership



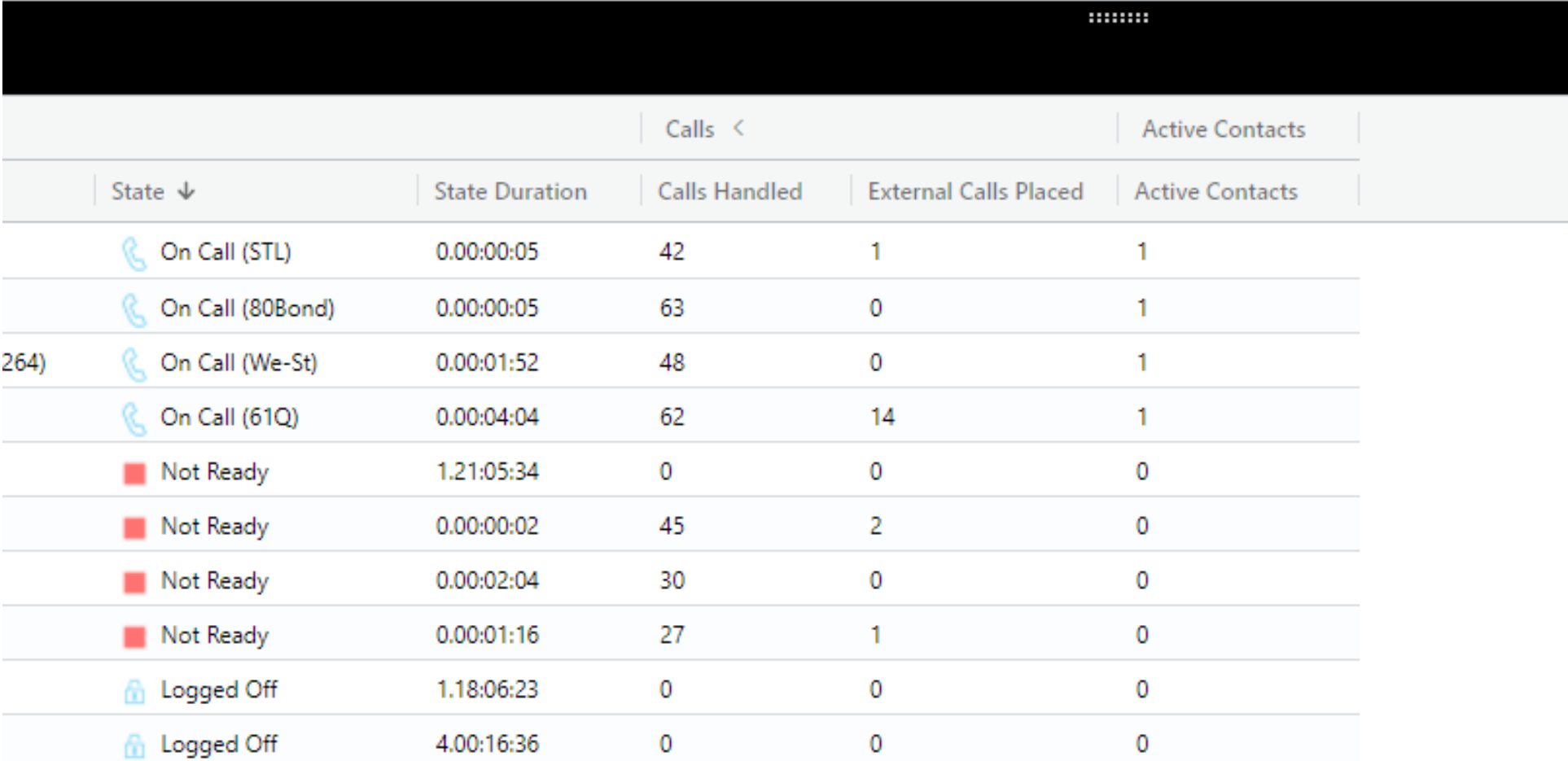
What changes did you try?











- Identifying the bottle necks and high demand times
- Registration staff supporting phone staff temporarily logging on when volumes are high (Ask for Help)
- Work hours were modified to address end of the day telephone call pressures – staggard lunch times



What changes did you try?

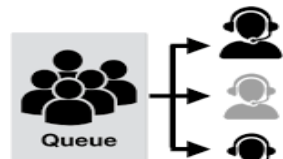
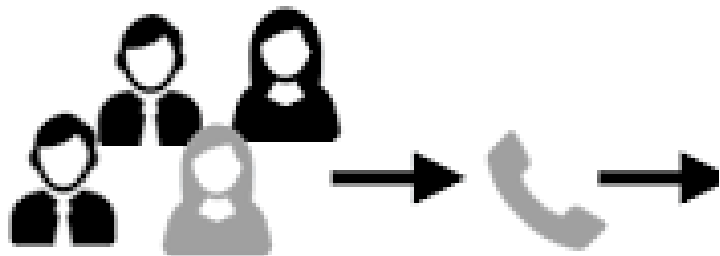
Clerical coordinators having live data through Icebar Manager which provide live data on call wait times and staff activity



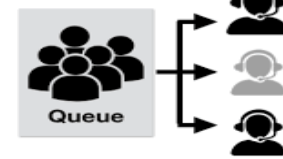
.....					
			Calls <	Active Contacts	
State ↓	State Duration	Calls Handled	External Calls Placed	Active Contacts	
 On Call (STL)	0.00:00:05	42	1	1	
 On Call (80Bond)	0.00:00:05	63	0	1	
264)  On Call (We-St)	0.00:01:52	48	0	1	
 On Call (61Q)	0.00:04:04	62	14	1	
 Not Ready	1.21:05:34	0	0	0	
 Not Ready	0.00:00:02	45	2	0	
 Not Ready	0.00:02:04	30	0	0	
 Not Ready	0.00:01:16	27	1	0	
 Logged Off	1.18:06:23	0	0	0	
 Logged Off	4.00:16:36	0	0	0	

What changes did you try?

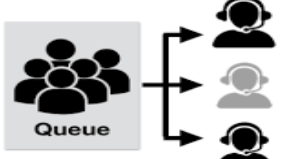
- Creating hub model [Central and East] hubs
- Relocating staff to be embedded in local sites
- Calculating the right ratio of staff to phone calls



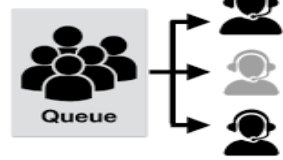
61 Queen



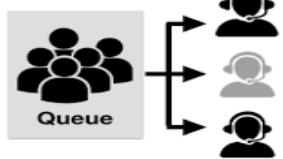
STL



Sumac



80 Bond

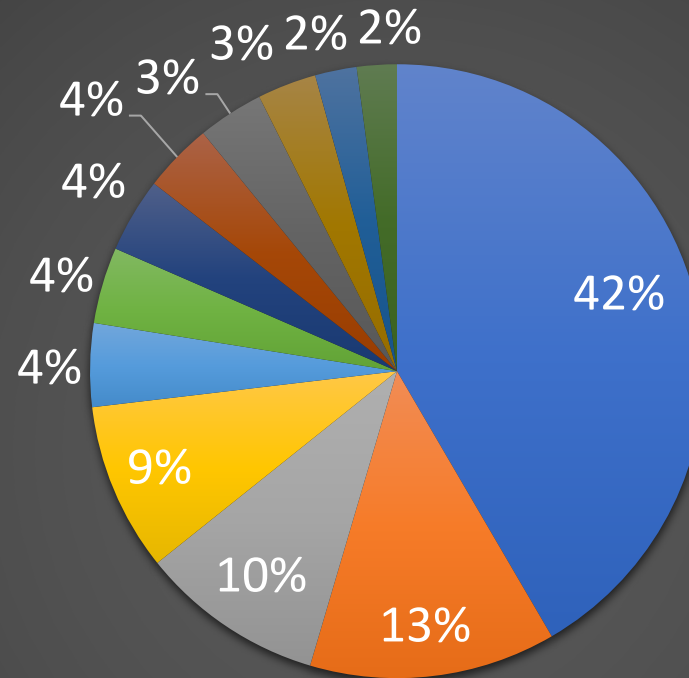


STL

What changes did you try?

- Understanding the reasons why our patients call the phone center

Reasons for phone call [East Line, n=1094]






70 % of phone calls reasons are:

- 50% Book, change or Cancel apt
- 10% Msg to MD/RN/NP
- 10% Rx renewal

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Requesting Appointments | CONFIRM APPTS/CHANGE CANCEL | msg to MD/RN/NP |
| PHARM RX | MISSED CALL TO RN/RETURNING CALL | REQUEST TO MAIL/EMAIL |
| BACK-LINE (other Health Providers) | Follow up on REFERRALS | New Patient Request |
| CHECK ON forms | REQUESTING REFERRAL | MD EMAIL MISSING INFO |

What changes did you try?

Offering appointments booking through FHTbookings@smh.ca

 Reply  Reply All  Forward



FHT Bookings

Mo AlHaj

Appointment Booking

3/14

Alert: This email is an auto-generated message from the St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team (SMHAFHT). It may take up to 3 business days to respond to your email. If your request is urgent, or if you require a faster response time, please call your clinic.

******ATTENTION******

Please be advised that we are only accepting email booking request for non-urgent virtual care appointments at this time to help decrease the spread of COVID-19. Virtual care appointments consist of phone calls and in certain cases, video visits. If you require an **urgent appointment**, please call and speak with our phone center.

Thank you for emailing the SMHAFHT appointment booking account. Please ensure that your email includes the following details information each time you schedule an appointment:

- Full name:
- Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY):
- Telephone number:
- Provider name:
- Clinic site:
- Reason for Visit:
- In-Person or Virtual Phone Visit

What changes did you try?

Creating an online booking system



 **ST. MICHAEL'S**
UNITY HEALTH TORONTO

Welcome! To start your online booking, please input the information below.

Welcome! Thank you for using our online booking service to book, change or cancel your appointment. Please call your clinic if your clinical concern is urgent or you are not able to book the type of appointment you're looking for in a time-frame that suits your needs. Should you have any questions, comments or suggestions, please contact your clinic to speak to one of our reception staff. Thank you

Online booking is only available for registered patients at this clinic. New patients cannot book appointments online.

First Name

Last Name

Health Number
Enter numbers only

Birth Date

What did you learn in the process?

- Change is bottom up rather than top down [involving phone center staff in problem solving and decision making early on]
- The data only doesn't tell the whole story. Understanding the context is a key
- Continuous feedback and data monitoring is a key to generate PDSAs
- Incorporation Quality Improvement into daily operations by involving all stakeholders



Thank you!

Questions?

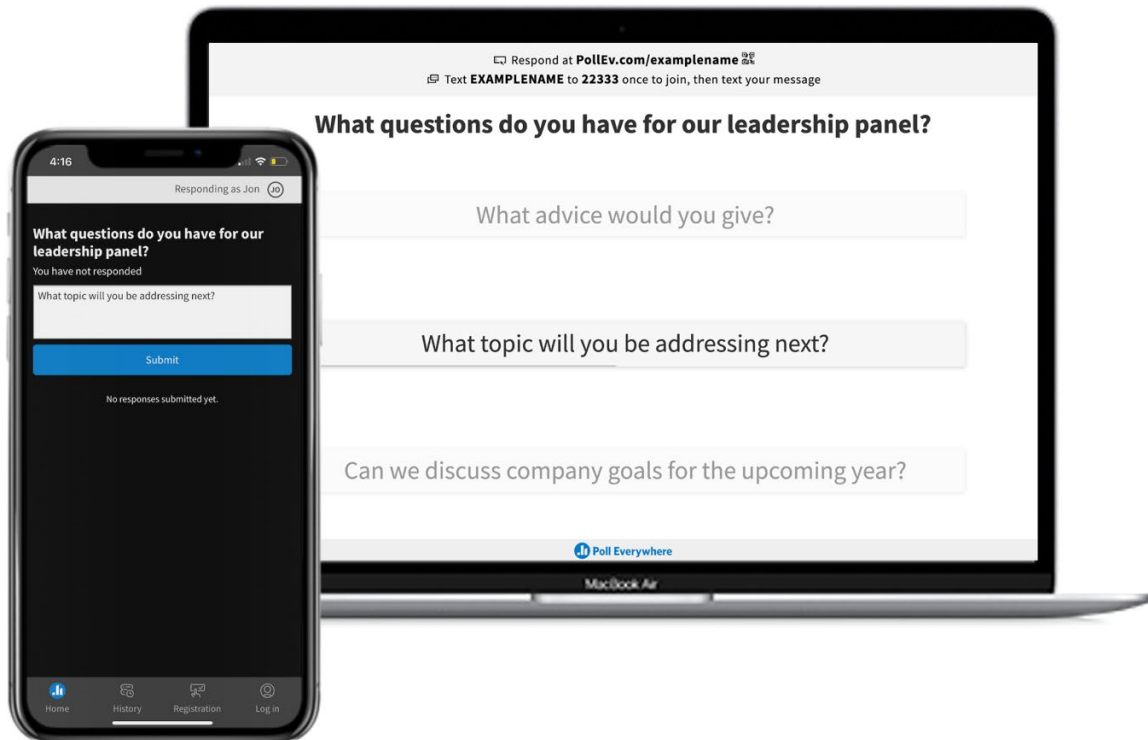
- Dr. Noor Ramji
noor.ramji@unityhealth.to
- Mr. Mo Al-Haj
mohammad.alhaj@unityhealth.to



Poll Everywhere

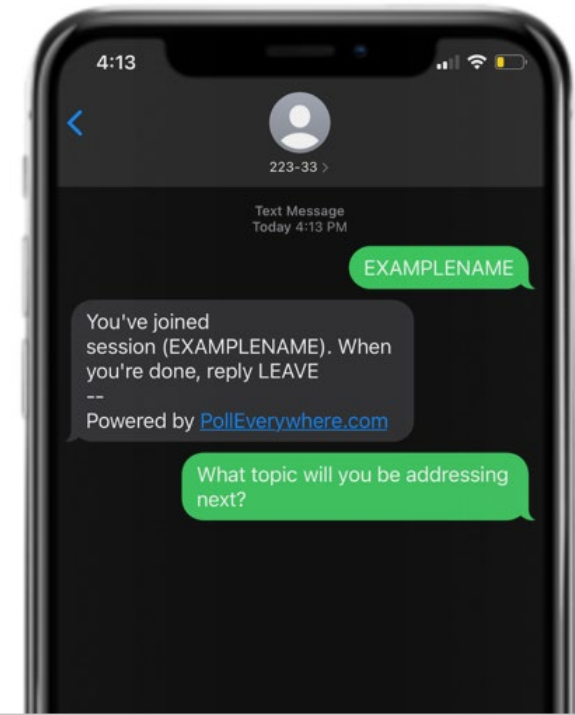
Web voting

Visit pollev.com/ictdfcm912. Wait for the question to appear, and type your response.



SMS voting

Start a new text message. Put the five digit code in the 'to' line. Type in **ICTDFCM912** followed by your answer in the body of the message.



Share & Learn: Helping Patients to Access Care

Upcoming session dates:

- Monday, June 13 from 12-1PM (Zoom)
 - Southlake Regional Health Centre & Women's College Hospital

You can still register for sessions 3!

Please visit dfcm.utoronto.ca/share-learn to register and view past session recordings and materials.

