

Increase physician staffing to decrease patient wait times in a student-run free clinic

Tony Chang, Soo Hyun Kim BS, Shayena Shah BA, Willemijn van Deursen BS, Catherine Huang BS, Jacky Chu BS, Dr. Tamara Montacute MD MPH, Dr. Mina Charon MD, Dr. Baldeep Singh MD

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Cardinal Free Clinics

ABSTRACT

Background: Arbor Free Clinic (AFC) and Pacific Free Clinic (PFC) are transitional care clinics run by Stanford University medical and undergraduate students. Long patient wait times are a significant issue for student-run free clinics. Causes for these delays include a shortage of volunteers or physicians, poor communication among the care team, or inadequate resources. To address this problem, we conducted a project to determine the primary points during a busy clinic day that contribute to patient wait times and identify potential causes for these delays. We also examined discrepancies between AFC and PFC to identify potential site-specific interventions.

Methods: To this end, we analyzed data between January 2022 to December 2022 from a cloud-based tracker that recorded patients' start and end time for each part of their appointment: check-in, preclinical student interview, MD interview, health education, referrals, labs (PFC only), and check-out.

Results: We found that the longest average wait time during a patient appointment was between the preclinical student interview and MD consultation, which was 25.3 mins at PFC and 19 mins at AFC. The second longest wait time was from MD consultation to referrals, which was 9.1 min at PFC and 5 min at AFC. A qualitative analysis identified that the primary driver for this wait time is that physicians are busy seeing other patients.

Conclusions: These findings indicate a need for more physician volunteers to reduce patient wait times, improve clinic efficiency, and improve patient satisfaction.