

Patient Access at The University of Kansas Health System IM Outpatient Clinics: Examining the Effect of Adding Nurse Practitioners to the Team

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Introduction. The national average wait time for a new patient to get a primary care appointment is 26 days, while at The University of Kansas Health System it is 45. If patients are not seen, their health may get worse which increases their mortality, emergency department utilization and hospitalizations. To alleviate the continuously long wait time, the internal medicine outpatient department hired nurse practitioners and assigned them to several physicians. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the influence that hiring nurse practitioners (NP) had on patient access.

Methods. Data on third next available appointment wait times was collected for physicians comparing six months before a NP was assigned to them, and six months after. These dates were within the window of 2019 and 2023. A RedCap survey was sent to the physicians to gauge what type of appointments they assign their NP to.

Results. Wait times improved for about half of the physicians. In the surveys, physicians reported varied uses for their NPs, but all included urgent care. A possible explanation as to why there was not a decrease in wait time for some is that due to demand, when appointments were available, they still filled quickly.

Conclusions. Further investigating needs to be conducted about the significant variation in the results. Physician maternity leave and full time equivalent (FTE) need to be accounted for in the data, and then reevaluated. Since patient access is a significant problem at KU, this is an important step to addressing long wait times.