

43. BEST PRACTICES AND NEW IMPULSES IN PATIENT FLOW OPTIMISATION

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BACKGROUND:

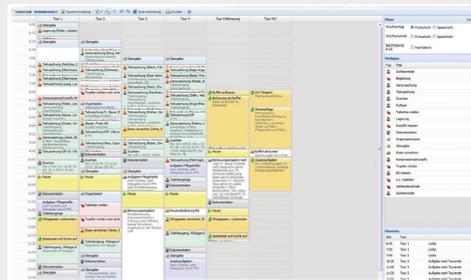
Efficiency in healthcare processes is the key to saving time and resources. That, in turn, allows flexibility and change, which positively impacts both the quality of patient care and employee satisfaction. To prove or refute this theory, a professor-student team from Aalen University in Germany tested it in a healthcare institution.

OBJECTIVES:

- Analyse work units and necessary work processes in-depth
- Streamline healthcare processes – to make daily routines more efficient and free up more time to spend with patients
- Measure results and get feedback from healthcare professionals – to make their work more enjoyable and fulfilling
- Identify the value of 'slack' in efficient work flow and patient management processes

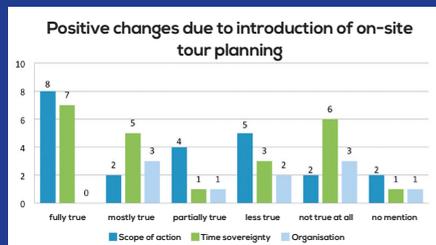
METHODS:

In a care facility, a university team identified net working times for each patient and staff member and verified them using a stopwatch. Using TeamTask Software, usually used in mobile outpatient services, regular work routines or 'working blocks' were flexibly scheduled. The schedule included slack, or 'off times', which healthcare professionals could decide how to use, e.g. for unexpected events, necessary changes, or to provide more quality care to patients. The implementation was reviewed and feedback given by the participants in this experiment. Finally, the project was evaluated and its further development planned.



Using TeamTask Software to plan flexible staff schedules.
Source: Aalen University

RESULTS:



Analysis of participants' perceptions of the impact of flexible scheduling.
Source: Aalen University

What has been achieved?

- Net working times for individual tasks/processes were identified within the teams
- Time 'killers' were given appropriate time, or they were streamlined through new processes
- Scheduled 'off times' helped the staff relax, catch up on work, or change routines as necessary
- After initial scepticism – and a fear of 'big brother watching them'–, most team members were happy with the new routines
- The main impact of flexible scheduling was increasing the staff's scope of action and their freedom to manage their time
- Key performers were more easily identified, and work loads were more easily balanced within and between teams
- Handovers were made more easily and more quickly

TAKE-AWAYS:

What worked well?

- Gaining the full support of the head of the organisation and management team to 'walk the talk'
- Integrating neutral support and assessment sources (the university team)
- Empowering staff to estimate and schedule their own working times and routines (self-organisation)
- Pre- and post-assessment of outcomes – time saving, satisfaction levels, etc.
- Making work more efficient and issues more transparent, so that they could be resolved more easily
- Overcoming mistrust on the part of the staff through cooperation and open communication
- Continuous improvement, building on successes

