Transforming the Arrival Experience: Leveraging Virtual Providers in Triage to Improve Emergency Department Patient Experience

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PROBLEM / OPPORTUNITY

The arrival experience in the emergency department (ED) is a critical yet often overlooked component of the overall patient journey. Upon arrival, patients frequently encounter prolonged waits and limited communication, leaving them uncertain about what to expect. This experience can lead to anxiety, frustration, and disengagement. Unlike scheduled visits with a known provider, ED visits lack an established provider-patient relationship, further diminishing trust and satisfaction. These early negative impressions are difficult to overcome, even if subsequent care is high quality.

IDEA SUMMARY

Shortly after checking in, the patient is placed in a dedicated consult room. A virtual ED provider performs the initial medical screening exam (MSE), orders, and documentation as part of the normal triage process. They also assign a patient to the appropriate treatment space. If the patient remains in the ED lobby (waiting room) the virtual provider will uses the platform to monitor the progress of the patient's workup, update the patient about their care plan and treatment progress, and disposition accordingly

VALUE PROPOSITION / BENEFITS

- Redefine the first impression
- Elevate patient interactions – easing concerns and setting expectations
- Boost satisfaction and loyalty

STRATEGY / AIMS

Methods:
VPIT integrates a remote emergency medicine provider into the triage process to engage patients shortly after arrival. This provider initiates a tailored workup, offers anticipatory guidance, and begins building rapport with the patient, converting passive wait time into active care. To appropriately measure impact, we implemented a real-time five-question survey immediately following each virtual triage interaction. Using a Net Promoter Score (NPS) format, patients were asked to rate the following:

- How welcome and comfortable they felt after speaking with the virtual provider
- How well the provider listened and addressed their concerns
- How clearly the next steps in care were explained and how included they felt in decisions
- How much the virtual interaction helped put them at ease while waiting
- How likely they were to recommend the Virtual Provider in Triage service to others

METRICS / RESULTS

Net Promoter Scores (NPS) for each question were:

Feeling welcome and comfortable: 78
Provider listening and communication: 82
Clarity of next steps and inclusion in decision-making: 83
Reassurance and reduced anxiety while waiting: 83
Likelihood to recommend VPIT to others: 80

Average NPS across all categories: 81.2, n=1,007

LESSONS LEARNED / NEXT STEPS

VPIT transforms the ED lobby from a passive waiting space to a proactive, high-impact point of care. By integrating virtual providers into the earliest moments of the ED visit, this model fosters trust, promotes patient understanding, and improves both emotional and clinical readiness. As EDs continue to seek scalable, patient-centered innovations, VPIT offers a replicable and effective strategy to transform the front end of emergency care delivery.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION