MMA
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Complicated Patients and Red Zone Time

Question:

How can a provider can stay on time seeing patients scheduled in 15 minute intervals if he/she is dealing with ‘complicated’ patients with multiple diagnoses, often spending 20 to 60 minutes with each patient. Having identified and removed non-provider work, the face-to-face time continues to be much longer than scheduled for. Do you have any articles/information you can share that would help us guide this provider towards improving her delays?

Answer:

There are 4 basic ways to deal with red zone length:

1. Provider focus. Some providers need to learn how to initiate an interview, conduct the interview, and close the interview. These are learned skills.
2. Elimination of interruptions. All interruptions lengthen red zones
3. Standardization of room and equipment. This helps reduce the turbulence within the room.
4. More help. This can take work out of the red zone, before, during and after the visit.

All providers will say that their patients are sicker and require more time. That might be true. We need to measure, observe and use the above the strategies. If patients do indeed require more time than the scheduled red zone time, then we have built a system that will get further behind at every visit and we have to increase the length of the red zone. Otherwise the cost of overtime, patient dissatisfaction and office chaos will hurt us.