

# Wait Time Communication

*In the Emergency Department*



**PRC**  
**EXCELLENCE**  
**ACCELERATOR**

## Why does this matter?

One of the most powerful techniques to improve and sustain an emergency department experience that drives patient loyalty is implementing ways to keep patients informed throughout their stay. When patients hold our Emergency Departments accountable for the quality of the patient experience through the ED Survey or ED CAHPS Survey, we often see several questions emerge as drivers of the care experience, related to patients' perceptions of coordination of care and services in the ED and how well patients and their loved ones were communicated with and kept informed throughout key transition stages of their visit.

## What can you do?

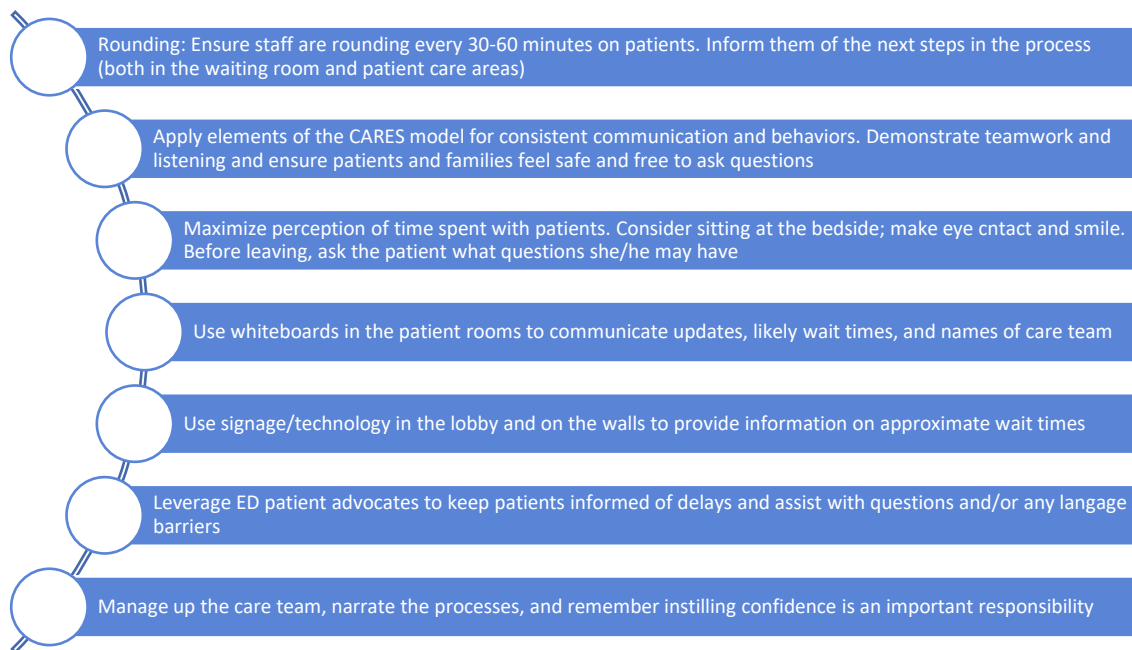
While nearly every hospital is dedicated in some way to enhance process and optimize patient flow through the department, it is important to remember that setting expectations and communicating can buy patient and family "good will", reassure them that the facility provides excellent care, and reinforce that they are in excellent hands. Specifically, we find it essential to introduce communication and tactics to keep patients informed regardless of the length of stay in the ED, especially if the patient must receive care in a hallway bed due to capacity challenges.

In any service experience (travel, customer care hotlines, eating out) we appreciate being kept informed. In the emergency department, people are highly anxious, likely very uncomfortable, and scared. Among patients' top thoughts and concerns are:

What is going on?                      How soon will I be called?                      When will the doctor be in?  
I am terrified...Why are my lab/imaging results taking so long?                      Did they find a problem?  
Why am I in the hallway?                      What am I waiting for?  
I am in so much pain...                      How long will this take until I can go home? Be admitted?

Addressing these questions proactively will go a long way to build relationships, instill confidence, create trust, and provide an excellence service experience for patients and their loved ones during a time of great need in the emergency department.

## 7 Strategies to Elevate Communication and Information



## Key Phrases to Support Communication

- At Registration... Welcome Mrs/Mr \_\_\_\_\_. We are going to take excellent care of you today. I am sorry you are ill. We have a highly trained team and you are in good hands
- Our Emergency Department is the best in the area. Many patients trust us with their care in the most emergent situations. That means today, it may take us a bit longer to care for you than our usual goal; however, you are in excellent hands and you can expect the highest quality care
- My name is \_\_\_\_\_. My role is \_\_\_\_\_. Here is how I provide you with excellent care: \_\_\_\_\_
- We pride ourselves in providing excellent care to each patient. Right now, the only beds we have available are in the hallway. I can assure you that you are still going to receive the best care and treatment. The doctor would like for us to begin care right away versus waiting for a room. This is actually the best seat in the house as you are under all of our watchful eyes. Please let us know if we can do anything to serve you better.

