

Nightmarish Waiting Time at Sarokar Hospital: A Case Study

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Abstract. This case examines the concerns of Dr. Madhu Verma, head of Obstetrics & Gynaecology (OB/GYN) at Sarokar Hospital, related to the waiting times that patients had to encounter during their outpatient visits. Many patients were complaining about high waiting times in the patient satisfaction survey. At the very heart of Sarokar's mission was the satisfaction of patients by providing quality healthcare services. The Dr. Verma was further aggravated by the upcoming annual performance assessment meeting. The management would review the performance, patients' feedback, and other important factors related to each department within the hospital. Dr. Verma was planning to put a proposal before top management to outsource a process consultant to reduce waiting times, impart effective capacity and demand management, and initiate smooth process flow in the OB/GYN's outpatient department. This case allows students to understand a real-world service operations situation, including customer-introduced variability. It enables them to exercise process analysis concepts using discrete-event simulation modelling software to model, analyse, and improve the problem at Sarokar Hospital, and thereby propose different scenarios to the hospital's management.

Keywords: process improvement; managing demand, level capacity strategy, chase demand strategy, managing capacity, discrete event simulation, service operations, patient satisfaction, healthcare.

1. Introduction

Dr. Madhu Verma, head of the Obstetrics & Gynaecology Department (OB/GYN) at Sarokar Hospital, was concerned about the recent patient satisfaction surveys. Many patients complained about the high waiting times they encountered during different activities in the department.

Her concern was aggravated by the upcoming hospital's annual meeting on performance assessment of each department. She was aware that the management was dedicated to Sarokar's mission of providing quality healthcare services and the satisfaction of their patients. To keep competition

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from other hospitals at bay, Sarokar needed to maintain the evolution of patients into customers.

The challenge was not only to reduce waiting times but also to have more effective capacity and demand management of the resources and smooth process flow in the outpatient department (OPD). Dr. Verma wanted to assess the current performance and was willing to consult an expert who could hopefully suggest some improvements to the existing system without high levels of investment.

2. Sarokar Hospital

Located in Ranchi City, India, Sarokar Hospital was a fast-growing hospital providing 24*7 emergency, pathology, pharmacy, a daycare facility, ultrasound, a high dependency unit (HDU), a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), surgery, arthroscopy, and stem cell banking. The hospital was founded by Dr. Sanjeev Kumar in 2004 with the mission to provide quality healthcare services to patients. Since that time, the city had witnessed a large number of medical centres opening their doors, causing high levels of competition between hospitals. Despite this, the growth of Sarokar was evidenced by an initial 25-bed single speciality facility increasing to a 95-bed capacity multi-speciality hospital. Sarokar maintained good patient levels by focusing on providing quality healthcare services and was ranked among the top healthcare service providers in Ranchi. The hospital specialized in obstetrics and gynaecology, orthopaedics, paediatrics, laparoscopic surgery, general surgery, urology, rehabilitation, physiotherapy, radiology, and diabetes.

3. Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology (OB/GYN)

Obstetrics and Gynaecology is the branch of medicine dealing with the care of women during pregnancy and childbirth. Sarokar Hospital had a fully functional and world-class OB/GYN department providing a wide range of services. With the service-oriented healthcare delivery model, the department was geared toward providing cost-effective and convenient treatment.

Over the years, the department evolved into a large outpatient service provider in the region. In such departments, the service quality is judged by the following metrics; accessibility of medical care, preventive measures, medical treatment outcomes, and waiting times. In 2023, over 5,000 patients visited Sarokar's OB/GYN department for outpatient services, making it the leading outpatient services provider in Ranchi. These outpatients were mainly attended to by Dr. Verma, supported by a junior doctor and clinical staff.