



# ECRI Institute's PSO Monthly Brief

May 2015

## Patient Flow Issues Reach Past ED

Emergency departments (EDs) often suffer from patient flow concerns; however, the factors most often associated with ED crowding extend beyond its walls: inpatient bed availability and care coordination.

ECRI Institute PSO has seen many events confirming the [adverse effects of ED crowding and increased wait times](#) (login required). Such crowding has a ripple effect; events reported to ECRI Institute PSO include ambulance diversion, delays in care and handoffs, and inadequate care during “boarding” (i.e., when a patient has been admitted, but must remain in the ED until a bed opens up in the appropriate department).

### Opening Patient Flow Bottlenecks

As with many improvement initiatives, leadership support is essential to the project's success. Recognition that improved patient flow is not only better for patient care but better for the organization's overall capacity is key. Likewise, a clear visualization of organization goals can help engage administrators and staff.

It is important to address patient flow concerns from an organizationwide perspective. Examining and addressing departments in isolation is ineffective. Likewise, data used to understand the organization's current patient flow status should be taken from a large enough sample to have a thorough understanding of daily, weekly, and monthly variations; capacity and demand; time spent preparing rooms for incoming patients; and turnover time statistics.

Once the facility's patient flow peaks and valleys are understood, strategies can be implemented to control them. For example, elective surgery schedules can be reviewed to ensure that an appropriate amount of operating rooms are available for emergent or urgent cases. Likewise, elective surgery schedules should also take into consideration the predicted need for an intensive care unit bed.

### Flowing with the Surge

Surge capacity is a reality for all healthcare organizations, and simply operating in disaster mode is ineffective as a management strategy. Therefore, during a non-surge time (e.g., not during peak flu season), the organization should develop a plan to manage such extreme peaks in demand.

[Contact us](#), and let us demonstrate how we can help you understand how to streamline patient flow.

#### Top 10 Patient Safety Concerns for 2015

Patient safety is a top priority for every healthcare organization, but knowing where to direct patient safety initiatives can be daunting. To help guide you in deciding where to focus patient safety

#### Patient Safety Center

**World-class research, guidance, and tools made available to the public.**

ECRI Institute is committed to patient safety, as it is the key element of our mission. The [Patient Safety Center](#) contains publicly available free

efforts, we developed the 2015 *Top 10 Patient Safety Concerns for Healthcare Organizations*.

- [Download the report now.](#)

resources to help all healthcare providers improve the quality and safety of the care they provide.

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