

A NURSING COLLABORATIVE

Harnessing Our Synergies to Improve Patient Wait Times

Joan Myers-Harrison, RN, BScN, CON(C); Helen Hou, RN, CON(C); Lisa Lun, RN, BScN, MA, Ed, CHPCN(C); Dr. Carmen Chung, MD, MSc., FRCPC; Dr. Sabrina Allegro, MD, FRCPC; Francis Cacao, RN, MN; Suzi Laj, RN, BN, MHS

DESCRIPTION

Keeping pace with the ever-growing cancer referral volumes continues to be a challenge for many Cancer Care settings, particularly in community hospitals. The Cancer Care Clinic at Humber River Health has seen an increase of 26% in new referrals in the last fiscal year. As a result, treatment visits have also increased by 15%. In addition, cancer treatments are more complex requiring increased chair times. Patient experience survey results revealed moderate to high dissatisfaction during clinic appointments related to excessive long wait times (Figure 2). In response, an interdisciplinary team was formed to reduce wait times and improve overall patient satisfaction (Figure 3).

OBJECTIVE

To reduce Cancer Care Clinic wait times and improve overall patient and staff satisfaction.

ACTIONS TAKEN

The inter-professional team developed an enhanced wait time strategy for nurses and physicians. Actions taken include:

- Developing a Cancer Clinic patient activity process mapping (Figure 1)
- Conducting a review and consultation with team members
- Using a "Nurse-Oncologist A" test case to evaluate clinic wait times
- Setting in-person appointments from 0800am-13:30pm
- Setting phone consults from 1500-1600pm for f/u and procedural results
- Avoiding double or triple booking and allocating lunch period
- Booking 30 minutes for new consults and transfer of care
- Avoiding urgent drop-ins and urgent patient letters

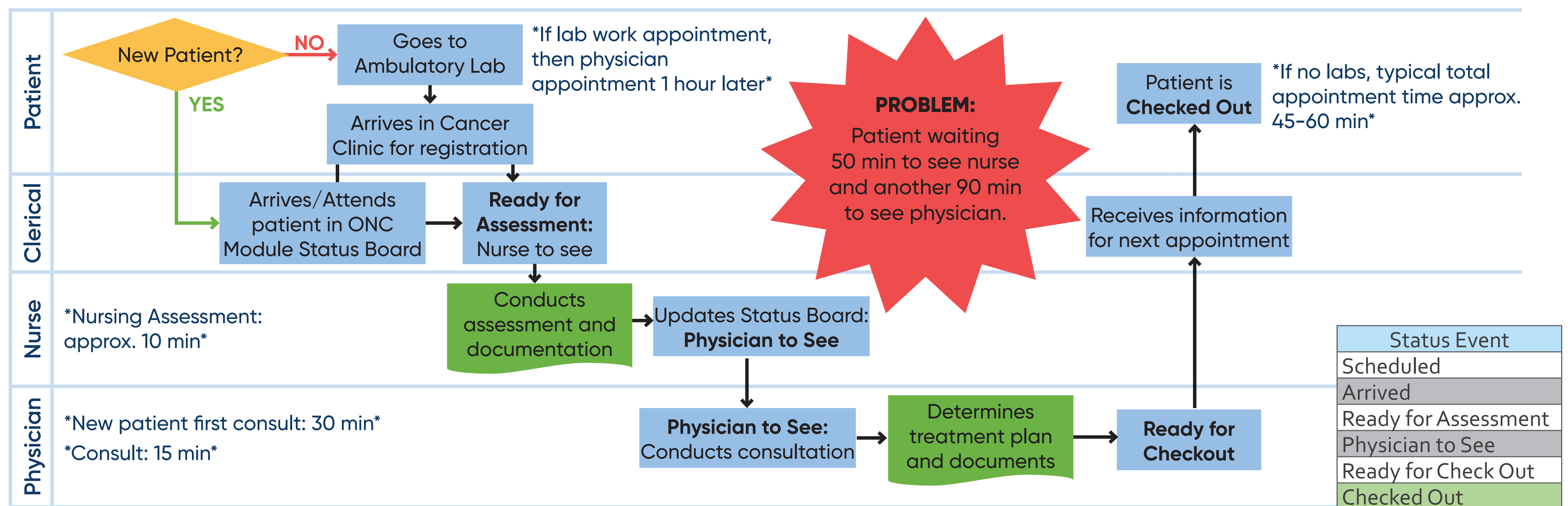


Figure 1. "Typical" Cancer Care Clinic Patient Activity Process Map.

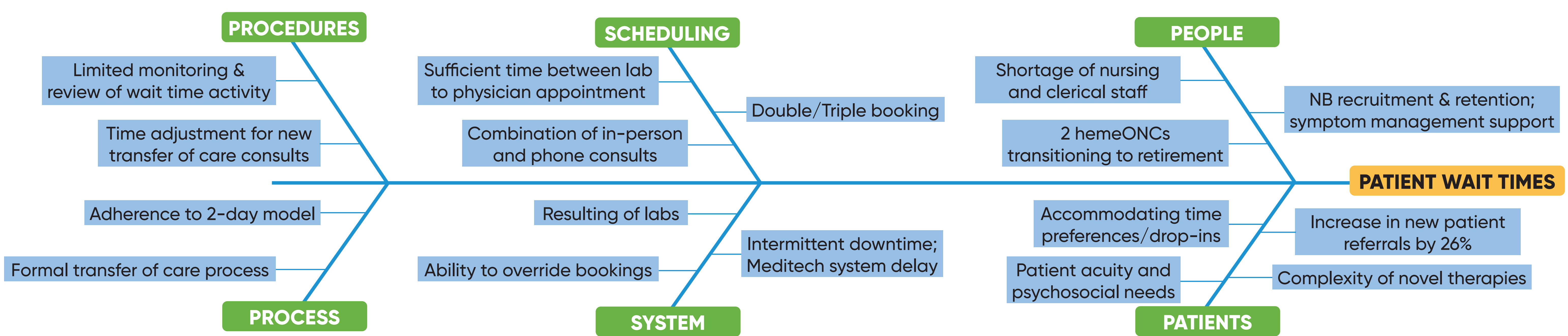


Figure 2. Contributing factors to increased Cancer Care clinic wait times.

Figure 3. Opportunities for improvement in Nurse-Physician clinic workflow.

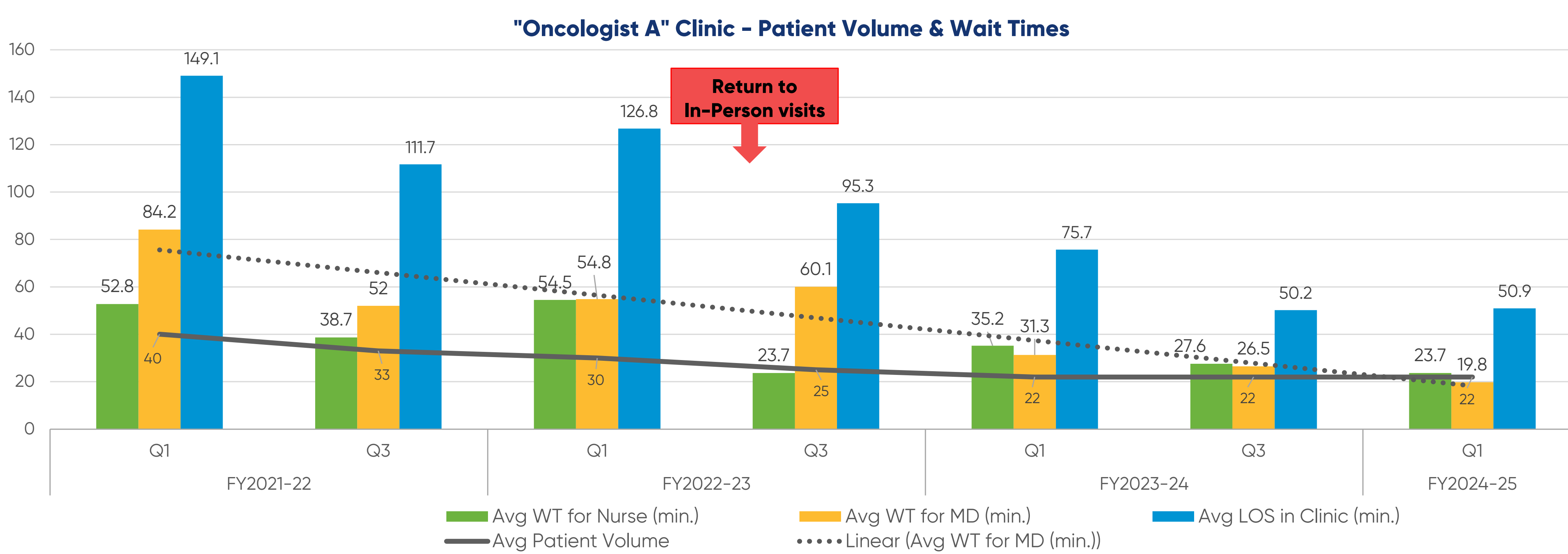
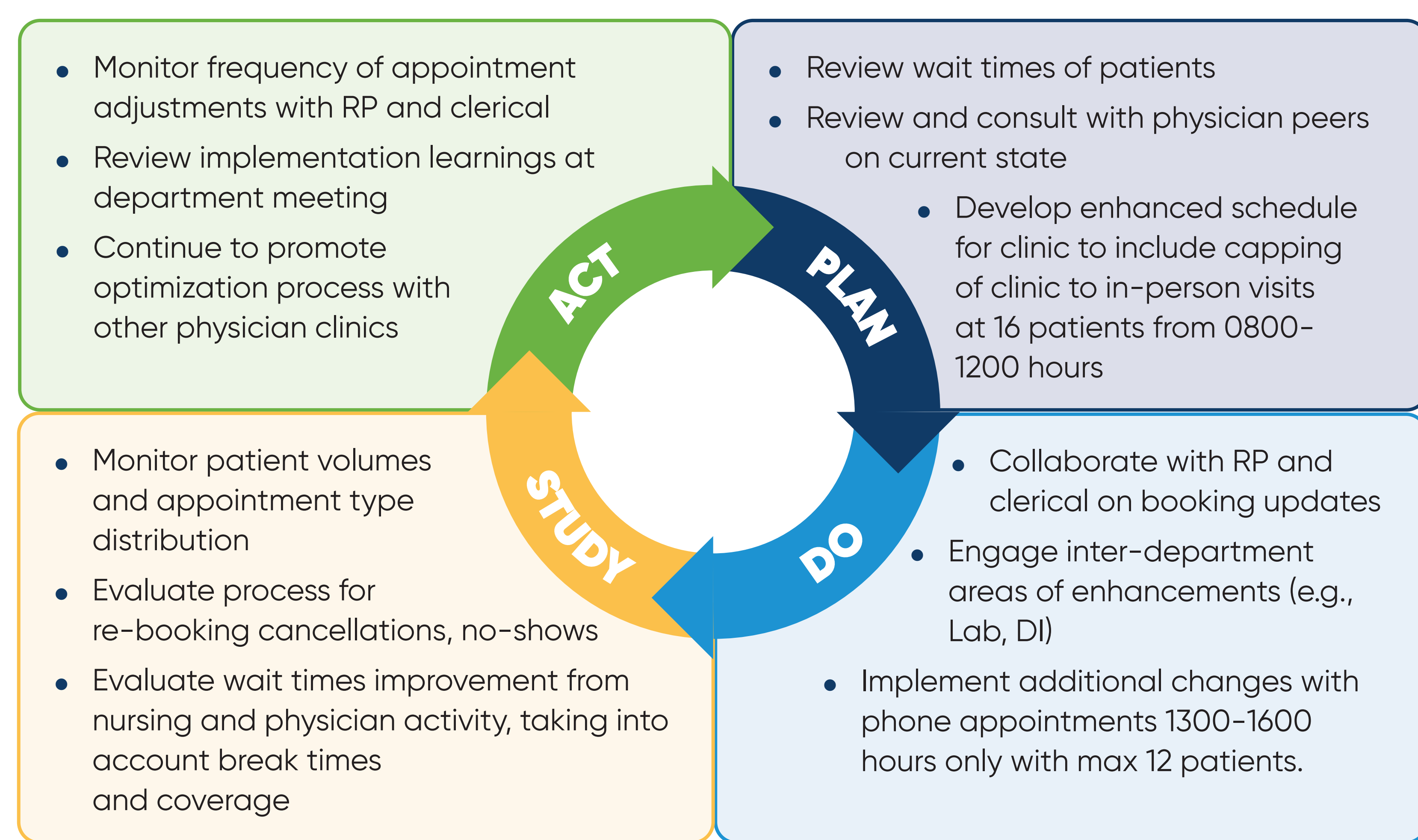


Figure 4. "Oncologist A" Clinic-patient volume and wait times.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Manageable patient volumes were maintained for the last 12 months. As a result of enhancements (compared to 2021), and 22 patients per clinic, wait times have improved on "typical" clinic appointment activity by (Figure 4):

- Avg. of 30 minutes (nursing)
- Avg. of over 60 minutes (physician)
- Avg. of 100 minutes (time of registration to leaving clinic)

The Clinic is implementing similar optimizations with other oncologists and adding additional human resources to enhance this new model of care.

LESSONS LEARNED

Oncology Nurses collectively engaging with key stakeholders to guide their design-thinking process can successfully improve clinic workflow, patient wait times, and patient experience.

