

Remarkable Results on Blood Test Service Scheduling in General Out-patient Clinics

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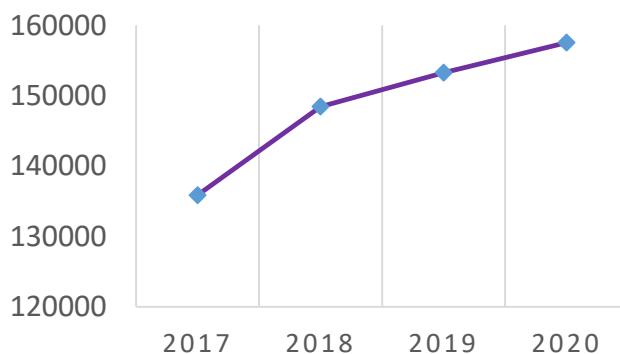
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Introduction:

Diabetes mellitus and hypertension are major chronic diseases managed in General Outpatient Clinics (GOPC). There has been an increasing demand on laboratory investigations to assess disease control and comorbidities. There was a 17.2% rise in blood taking attendances in 2020 compared with 2019. Blood test service (BTS) was quota free. Due to the first-come-first-served basis and herd behaviour, patients tend to come early in the morning to get the queue number. Some patients expressed concern over long waiting time up to 2-3 hours causing prolonged fasting. Therefore, conflicts between patients and health care workers arose and created tension and stress in health care workers. Limited space and difficult crowd control made the situation even worse under the COVID-19 pandemic.



NUMBER OF BLOOD TAKING ATTENDANCE IN HKEC GOPCS



Methods:

A new BTS scheduling system was piloted in Violet Peel GOPC in Aug 2020. Clinic divided the blood taking period in a session into 3 slots. The former part of the session was reserved for fasting blood tests, and the latter part for non-fasting blood tests. Patient attended according to the arranged time slot. Corporate Queue Management System and Kiosks further smoothed patient's journey.

Results:

Since the implementation, patient's waiting time for blood taking had markedly shortened from 2-3 hours to less than 1 hour. Besides, it facilitated crowd management to achieve social distancing under COVID-19. The segregation between fasting and non-fasting blood taking patient pool minimized the risk of prolonged fasting. Last but not least, BTS facilitated manpower arrangement under its constraint.

Conclusions:

The BTS scheduling system establishes a win-win situation for both patients and staff. This implementation process requires behavioural change through patient education and staff effort. The system will be promoted to other GOPCs in our Cluster.