



# With Zero Patient Waiting Time its Goal, a Sutter Health Primary Care Clinic Improves Flow, Outcomes, and Satisfaction



## Issue:

Inefficient processes impacted patient care, experience and satisfaction. The chief complaint was wasted time waiting for care and to leave the clinic. Patients may waste 40% of their time waiting between: arrival; check-in; MA prep; exam; follow-up instructions; and discharge.



## Approach:

**Apply scientific-method thinking** using work design principles to synchronize caregivers' work to meet patient needs. **Gather data** on visit steps, experiment to simplify handoffs, reduce variation and maximize reliability and predictability. **Distribute flow across a shift** by scheduling appointments every 7 minutes. **Signals between caregivers** (MA to physician, e.g.) at standard times maintain flow, eliminate waiting/time alone, and ensure patients receive follow-ups.



## Results:

Patient time and satisfaction:

- Reduced visit time from 69 minutes to 39 minutes (43% improvement).
- Zero patient wait time through continuous flow to the next step.
- Patients appreciated that physicians focused on them while the MA scribed.

Clinic staff:

- Cared for 72 patients each day, focused on one patient at a time, and reserved one hour for end-of-day reflection.



## Staff Feedback:

“Our day just went so much smoother... It’s a team approach in how we’re going to handle that, which was very powerful.”

“There’s no patient wait times, and I think that’s great.”

“The team has much more confidence that they can actually design and actually put change in place.”