



IMPROVING PHONE ACCESS ACROSS CAMBRIDGE HEALTH ALLIANCE

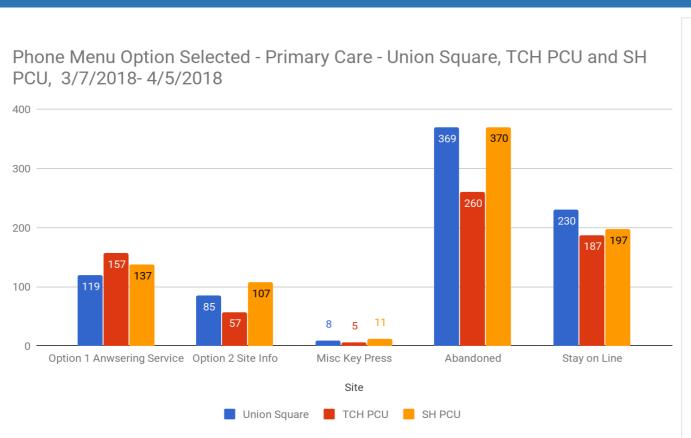
BACKGROUND AND AIM

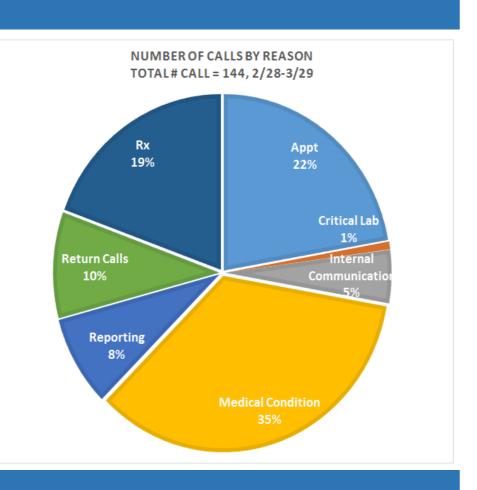
Patients of Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA), a public hospital in Massachusetts with 15 ambulatory sites that serves vulnerable and diverse populations, experience barriers accessing health services through the phone system such as long wait times (avg=41 sec), complex phone trees, and call disconnections.

This initiative aimed to improve phone access through standardizing and simplifying operating hours and after hours phone menu across CHA.

UNDERSTANDING CURRENT STATE

Data from thirty-nine phone lines revealed low utilization of multilingual menu (<10%) and a high abandonment rate with 7.31% average among pilot sites. According to a report of 1,445 after hours calls, only 60.3% triaged to on-call providers required medical input.

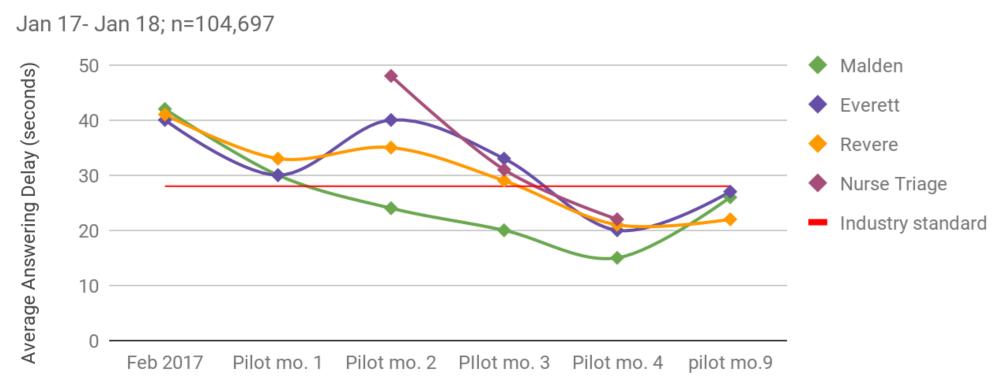


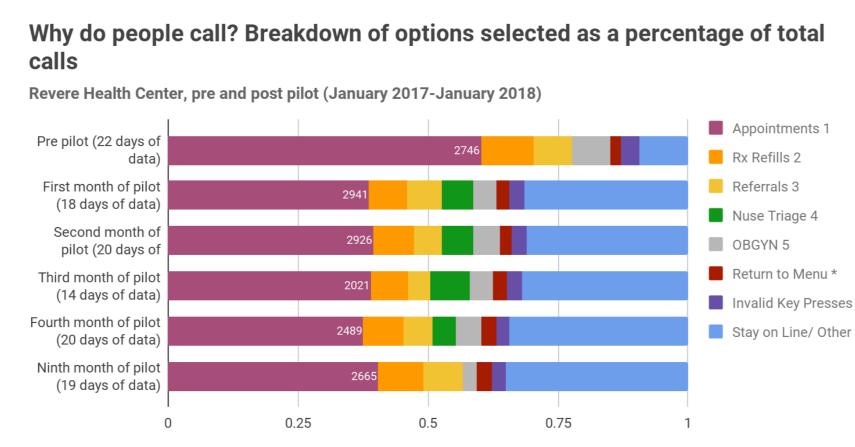


IDENTIFYING AND IMPLEMENTING SOLUTIONS

Simpler, standardized, and patient-friendly scripts were piloted and cascaded for operating hours and after hours phone menus. Changes included reduced options (including languages), discontinuation of underused voice mailboxes, addition of a "return to main menu" option and consolidation of answering services for after hours calls.

Average Answering Delays in CHA MCREW Sites





CHA-wide After Hours Phone Call <u>nswering Services</u> <u>Patient</u> No standardized protocols for using . Reschedule appt 2. Cancel appt 3. Place Referra 4. Refill Rx naccurate directory info; long wait time 5. Hours and Fa: clarify call info therefore cause delay Primary Care / Specialty Sites No updated info/numbers of No specific point of contact for regula ome calls were transferred instead conferenced, interpreter services Phone Menu for Malden (4/7/17) Thank you for calling CHA Malden Family Medicin If you have a medical emergency, lease hang up and dial 911 or choose from the following 5 options press 1 For medication refills, press 2 For referrals, pres Routed to referral and we will call you back as soon as possible. Thank you If you need a nurse to call you Routed to N7 back because of a press 4 All other callers, stay on the line and your call will Centralized be answered in the Scheduling epresentative will be with you order it was shortly. Thank you. received

TAP TO GO BACK TO KIOSK MENU

Operating Hours Phone Menu Baseline Data Collection

February 2017

Average Wait Time decreased by 39% over 9 months

5 Vendors Identified

1,445 Call Records
Reviewed

After Hours Phone Menu Data Collection and Gemba Walk

TIMELINE

Operating Hours

New Menu Pilot

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July 2017

After Hours

New Menu Pilot

July 2018

After Hours calls routed to vendor

reduced by 66%

March 2017

32 Phone lines

covering 15 Primary

Care sites and Specialty

Care in 3 hospitals

After Hours Menu
Cascaded across CHA

September 2018

September 2018

Potential Annual Cost Savings

IMPLICATIONS

In addition to the standardization of the phone menus across CHA, this project also established an effective framework that engages multidisciplinary stakeholders (Patient, Interpreter Services, Call Center, Answering Services, Operations team, Performance Improvement team) to identify, apply, and disseminate best practices to improve patient access and reduce system inefficiencies.

NEXT STEPS

- Develop call triage protocols
- Continue monitoring the metrics
- Consolidating after hours answering service vendors
- Build capacity to clinically triage and handle after hour calls

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