

Title: Reduced Time to Surgery: Optimizing the Bariatric Surgery Pathway

Authors: Wil Ramsey, MHA; Tammy Monson, MA; Adam Meyers, MBA; Laura Tibor, MBA

Background: The Mayo Clinic Rochester Division of Endocrinology serves as an entry point for bariatric patients to receive surgery. Typically, bariatric patients pursue weight management care pathways associated with lifestyle changes, medication management, or surgery to combat the effects of obesity. The Endocrinology team accommodates all weight management care pathways. For bariatric surgery, the team creates a thorough care plan to ensure the patient is optimized for surgery, limit surgical complications, and establish a healthy lifestyle post-operatively. The multidisciplinary team consists of physicians, advanced practice practitioners, dietitians, nurses, and psychologists.

Objective: To increase bariatric surgical case volumes and reduce time to surgery for patients.

Planning/research methods: The multidisciplinary project team composed of scheduling, prior authorization (benefits check), nursing, advanced practice practitioners, physicians, dietitians, surgeons, psychologists, and administrators performed a comprehensive review of the bariatric outpatient practice to determine opportunities to improve the patient experience, expedite the time to surgery, screen patients appropriately, and ultimately increase surgery case volumes.

The team began by mapping out the current process and collecting baseline data. The patient process started with a nurse intake call, followed by separate appointments with a physician and psychologist. Then, the benefits check was completed. This total process took on average 6 months.

The team identified several inefficiencies in the process which included:

- Patients that did not meet necessary medical thresholds (e.g., BMI) were obtaining access to the bariatric surgery program.
- Incomplete patient information would often result in patients gaining access to the care teams who were not genuinely interested in pursuing bariatric surgery.
- Lack of a coordinated patient itinerary and workflows resulted in patient and care team frustration. It also limited the number of surgical patients referred to the surgeons.

Implementation methods, including sample sizes: Beginning in September 2022, changes to care team workflows and the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) were implemented and utilized on the 340 patients on the waitlist. Changes included:

- New scheduling team decision trees and workflow to screen eligible patients
- New patient triage questionnaire to calculate complexity score to assist the nurse triage
- Prior authorization benefits check was moved up to occur immediately after scheduling
- Nurse triage takes place after the benefits check is complete and identifies patients who don't have interest in bariatric surgery, and/or do not medically qualify for surgery
- Physician calendars were altered to include dedicated time slots based on complexity of patients
- Created a Bariatric Snapshot view in the EMR to provide a singular dashboard for the care team which eliminated time wasted as care team members searched the medical record information
- Developed Bariatric patient education (FAQs and informational videos)

Results: The changes implemented increased surgical volumes and improved efficiency. Surgical patients are now more effectively identified, educated, and prepared for surgery. Surgical volumes for 2022 increased by 58 cases compared to 2021. All patients are now triaged through nursing which helps educate patients on surgery complications, medical thresholds, and gauge patient interest in surgery or other non-surgical weight management pathways. The time to surgery has been reduced by 50%, from 6 to 3 months. No incremental FTE was required during the execution of this project.

Metric	Before	After	% Improvement
Increased volumes of surgical cases completed per year	395 cases*	453 cases	14%
Average days from nurse triage to physician appointment	48 days	21 days	56%
Average days from physician appointment to psychologist	13.8 days	3.1 days	77%
Average days to complete benefits check	28 days	5.5 days	80%
Number of patients on the bariatric surgery waitlist	340 patients	0 patients	NA

*2021 data compared to 2022

Contact: Wil Ramsey, MHA Ramsey.wilford@mayo.edu