

Shortening Wait Times in Healthcare with a Queue Management System



Few things make us feel as powerless and frustrated as spending time waiting in line, especially when there’s no telling how long the wait will be.

In the past few years, there has been a big shift in what it means to wait, especially in public spaces. The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed digital adoption for people of all age ranges. In the absence of physical contact, our devices kept us entertained, connected, and engaged. And the effects have been lasting.

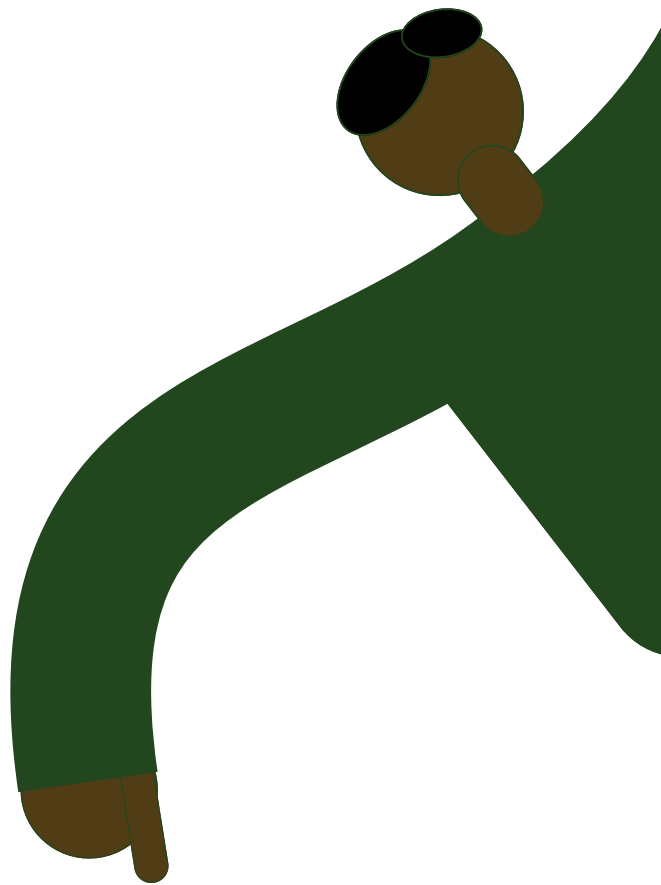
We rely on technology more than ever before and expect instant gratification with every interaction. We have become less patient and more digitally-driven. In response, businesses have leaned into technological advances, offering innovative solutions such as remote check-in, the ability to line up using a smartphone, or anything that can help get customers in and out faster when they’re in a physical space.

The healthcare industry — where waiting is unfortunately a notorious and frustrating problem — has been slow to take advantage of solutions like virtual queue management systems that offer convenience to visitors and provide key operational efficiencies for businesses. According to [Healthcare Finance News](#), in the United States, the average time a person waits to see a doctor at a private practice is 18 minutes, 35 seconds. The wait at hospitals is significantly longer. According to [U.S. News & World Report](#), the median wait for a hospital room in the U.S. is 103 minutes, with Washington, D.C. having the longest median wait time, 286 minutes.

Long waits, lack of communication, and inaccurate wait time estimates are still the status quo when it comes to hospitals, emergency rooms, and medical offices. But while change has been slow, there are hopeful signs that the industry may be modernizing.

Over the past decade, we’ve seen an increased focus on **patient satisfaction**, with healthcare facilities of all sizes striving to deliver the best experience possible. It’s no surprise that wait times play an important factor here. According to [a study](#) run by medical database Vitals, patient wait times were strongly correlated with satisfaction scores. The shorter the wait, the higher the score (and the happier the patient).

Having to visit a healthcare provider — whether it be a private office, an urgent care clinic, or a large hospital — is often stressful and leaves patients riddled with anxiety. Long, unpredictable wait times only add fuel to the fire, resulting in frustrating experiences that have cascading effects impacting healthcare staff and overall reputation. A virtual queue management system **provides certainty to patients** when it comes to intake and wait times, relieving some of their stress while streamlining patient flow.



In this guide, we’ll show you how you can use tech to decrease patient wait times and improve your overall patient experience.

We’ll cover:

- A brief history of Queueing Theory and how it can be applied in a healthcare setting
- The psychology of waiting
- The benefits of virtual queue management
- How virtual queues work, step by step
- Queue management case studies from the field

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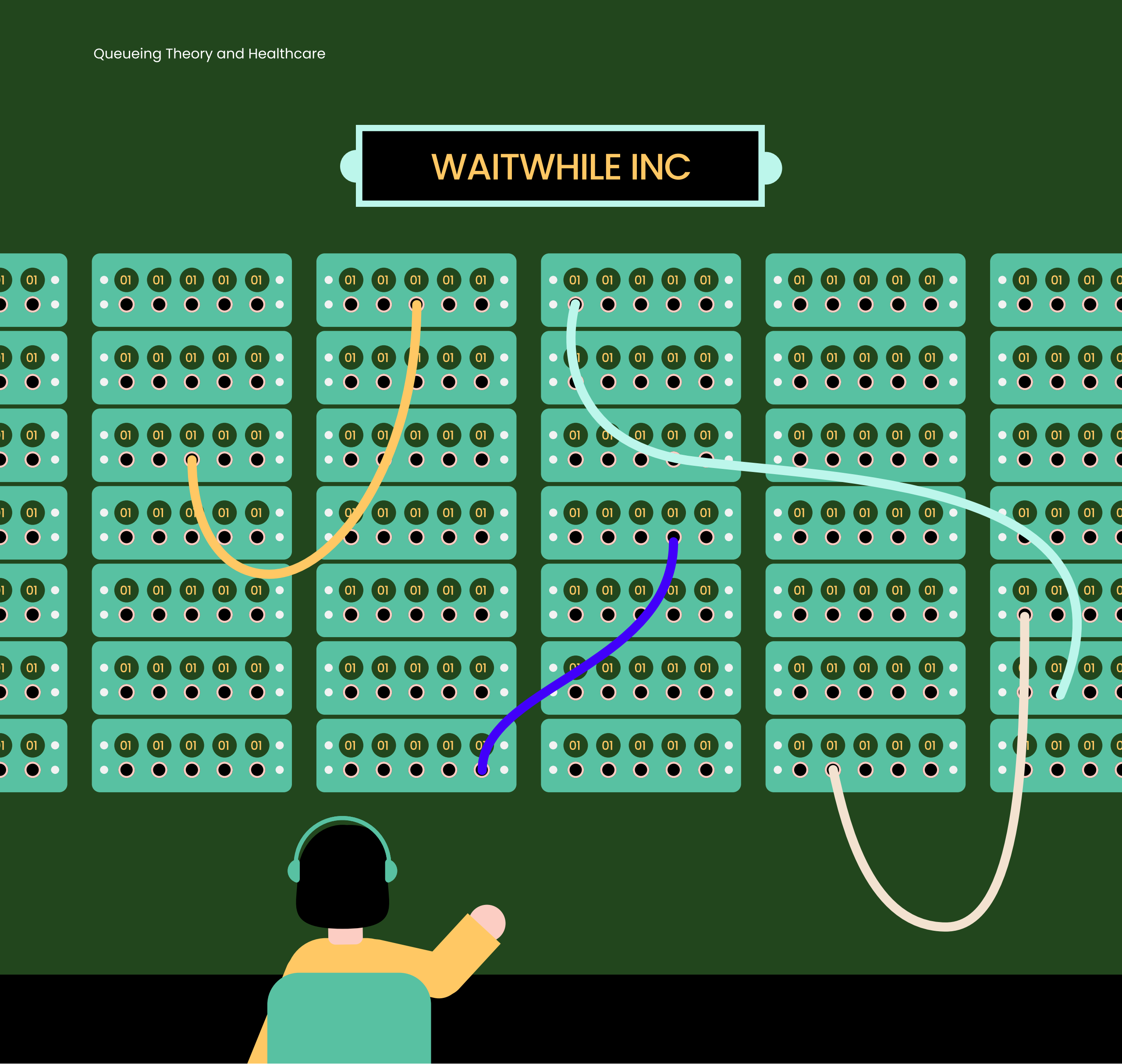
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Queueing Theory and Healthcare

The challenge of providing accurate wait times in healthcare

Modernizing any part of the hugely intricate healthcare system is no easy task. Many factors play into predicting how long a patient might have to wait, including room and staff availability, as well as the need to prioritize patients with more serious health conditions over others. In healthcare, the stakes are higher than in virtually any other business setting because waiting too long can have a direct impact on a person's well-being.

So what can be done to solve this thorny problem? Forward-thinking experts believe that the healthcare industry should learn from consumer-facing organizations that have focused on streamlining their operations and start operating like any other business with a supply chain. If the healthcare industry looked at the balance between supply and demand, came up with contingency plans based on learnings, and applied Queueing Theory to discover and eliminate obstacles, it would be well on its way to becoming more timely and efficient.



How Queueing Theory can help

Queueing Theory can be applied to any industry where waiting is involved – be it waiting for people or supplies. This mathematical study of the process of how lines work and how waits function got its start in the early 20th century to solve the problem of call waiting back when human operators would manually connect callers with jack plugs and cord boards.

The field has been quite active over the past century, with new generations of mathematicians iterating on a slew of formulas in an effort to most accurately predict the complex machinations of the ways queues form and progress, including wait time estimations. Queueing Theory work examines **every component of waiting in line**, including the arrival and service processes, number of servers and systems in place, as well as the number of “customers” – which might mean people, data packets, cars – anything that’s part of a supply/ demand process.

By applying [Queueing Theory](#), a business can develop more efficient systems, processes, pricing mechanisms, staffing solutions, and arrival management strategies to reduce wait times and increase the number of visitors that can be served in a given time frame. In fact, it’s just what Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s Mark Murray, MD, MPA proposes for the healthcare industry.

Waiting in a medical practice

Murray believes that the two key ways to make wait times more consistent and predictable is by streamlining appointment types and taking **supply and demand** into account. [According to Murray](#), “increased waiting times occur when there’s an open slot...but no one is using it. Healthcare providers must apply Queueing Theory to appointment scheduling. If we can reduce the number of queues or lines, we can actually reduce the time it takes in total wait time inside the system.”

In other words, if a general practitioner who segments their day into multiple appointment types (ie. physicals, concerns over lingering symptoms, concerns about pain, etc.) would schedule only one appointment type that covered any need under the general practice umbrella, there would be less complexity and fewer unused open appointment slots. As a result, the system would move along more quickly and predictably.

While Murray admits that it wouldn't be possible to streamline all appointment types into one because some require special equipment or rooms, he believes that for the most part it can be done. **Simplifying appointment types** and segmenting less would free up "appointment clerks and receptionists from trying to figure out what patients want or putting them into a particular pigeonhole [and] is probably one of the more dramatic ways to reduce demand," he wrote.

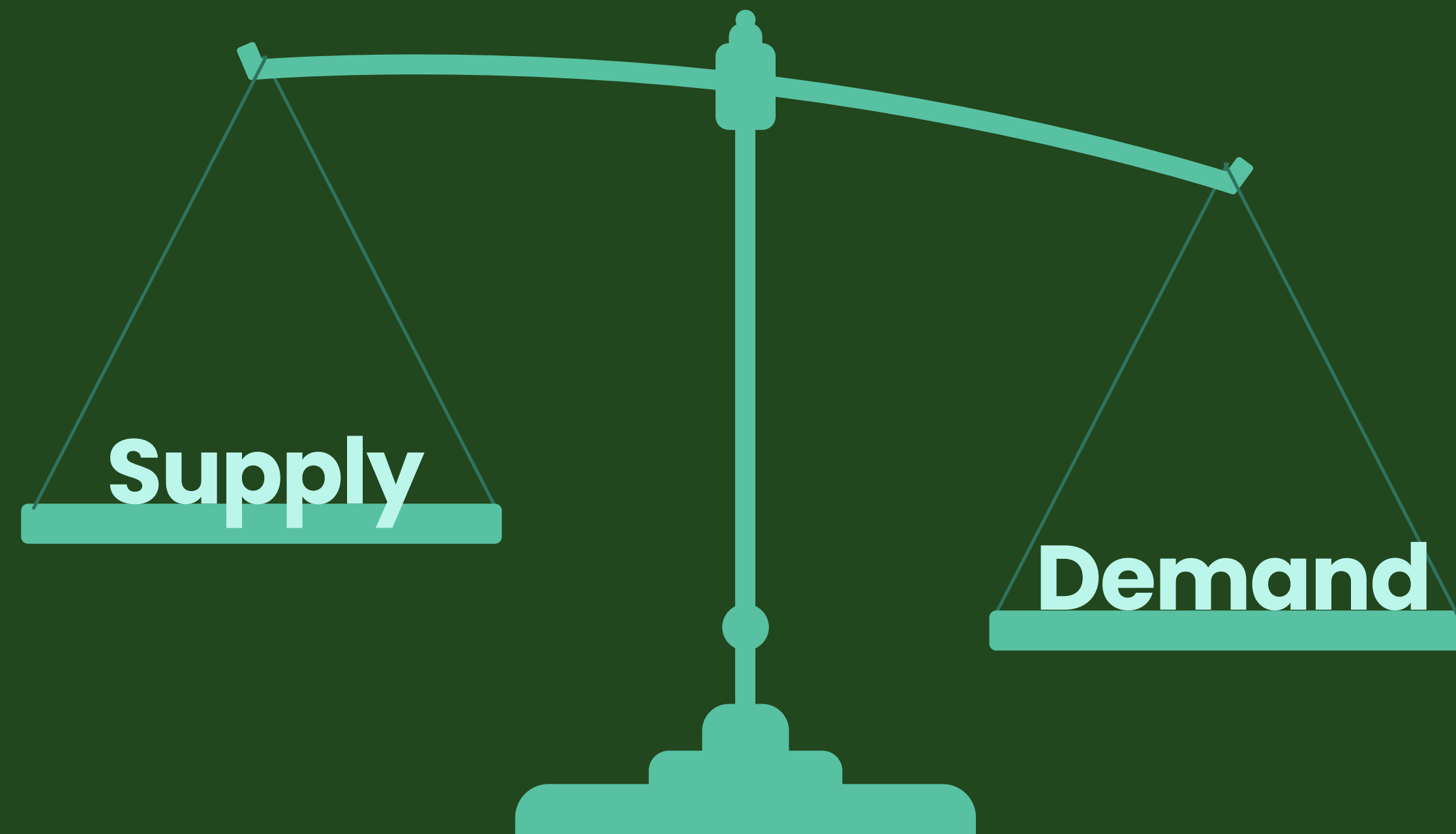
The second part of the equation, according to Murray, is addressing **the problem of supply and demand**. "The number of doctors working any particular day should fit the demand as well as possible — making sure we have enough supply each day, each half-day, each hour, each minute," he wrote.

This is not currently how the industry operates. Doctors are not seen as "supplies" and there are no contingency plans for predictable upswings in demand such as an increase in sickness during the flu season, coupled with the fact that many doctors take vacation during the winter holiday months. Murray urges practices to ask, "What are we going to do when there's variation in supply or variation in demand?"

Although medical professionals can't control external demand (patients signing up for appointments), Murray points out that once a patient has been seen and if a doctor determines they need to come back for a return visit, this becomes an internal demand and is easier to control. "You can use the internal demand to load-level," Murray suggests. "You bring patients back at times during the day when demand is predictably lower — early mornings or late in the week."

Applying Queueing Theory and looking at the operational chain in a hospital setting the way you would in any other business with a supply chain is the first step to fixing the notoriously strained and unpredictable healthcare waiting system.

Two key ways to make wait times more consistent and predictable is by streamlining appointment types and taking supply and demand into account.



Waiting in the emergency room

Waiting for a routine checkup or a dentist appointment can be frustrating, but it's nothing compared to the anxiety of spending hours in a crowded emergency room. And yet, according to a recent [National Academy of Medicine](#) (formerly known as Institute of Medicine) report, "overcrowding, prolonged waiting times, patient care delays, and scarce resources are common in urban emergency medicine today."

Long waits can have serious consequences because "besides contributing to increased levels of patient frustration and anxiety, prolonged waiting times and protracted lengths of stay can also increase the proportion of patients who leave emergency departments without being seen by a physician," according to the report. Faced with a long, unpredictable wait, frustrated patients may opt to completely forgo medical assessment and treatment, potentially delaying critical care and ultimately worsening their condition.

But getting accurate wait estimations in an emergency room is particularly challenging and in some ways more difficult than in an appointment-driven medical practice. It's no surprise that the gap between estimated and actual wait time is even wider and that patients usually end up waiting for many hours.



Let's look at some of the factors at play. In an emergency room, the imbalance between supply and demand is more pronounced. According to the National Academy of Medicine, here are the **top factors that drive difficulty in predicting accurate wait times** in an emergency department:

- Triageing
- Bed management
- Discharge planning and placement
- Coordination and communication among personnel from different departments

Because the ED (emergency department) is an intake point that coordinates with numerous other departments in the hospital (each with their own queues), the task of managing patient flow extends beyond just the emergency room waiting area. Getting a patient seen in the ED is one thing, but being able to predict how long it'll take to vacate that space for another patient requires a large number of varied and complex inputs.

If you're looking at it from a Queueing Theory perspective, there are **more queues feeding into the system** (patient discharge location, available beds, available personnel, communication between different departments, etc.). More queues means greater variability and more reasons for delays, so simplifying processes and applying effective queue management is even more critical when it comes to emergency room care.

"Because patients are sorted into multiple waiting queues, the provider supply is spread out, which introduces inefficiency and wasted time into the system. Queueing Theory holds that the effect of **variability on wait times will be more pronounced** in a system with an increased number of queues," wrote the [National Academy of Medicine](#). Similar to the general healthcare system, experts advise that in an emergency room setting, "optimizing performance requires measuring the demand, capacity, and flow into and out of each node within the system, and system-wide assessments and adjustments."

The solution to optimizing performance sounds onerous, and it certainly is — that is, if you take on the task manually. The beauty of a **virtual queue management system** like [Waitwhile](#) is that it automatically accounts for all of the factors above and uses machine learning-powered models to deliver accurate wait time estimates. These not only help ease the frustration and stress for waiting patients, but also add much-needed predictability to healthcare operations.

We'll dive into exactly how virtual queue management works and cover all the ways it can streamline healthcare operations in both appointment and walk-in-based settings in just a bit. But first, let's consider the human side of the waiting equation and explore how psychological research can be applied to lessen the emotional toll on waiting patients.

The task of managing patient flow extends beyond just the emergency room waiting area.



The Human Side of Waiting

More than just math

Making changes to structural and systemic issues that have long plagued this complex industry is essential to achieving real change, but there's a simpler way to make quick improvements. While Queueing Theory looks at the mathematical side of waiting, there is another side that must be considered: **human psychology**. It addresses the pain people feel while waiting for healthcare, and is not as cut and dry as one might think. According to MIT operations researcher [Richard Larson](#), "Often the psychology of queueing is more important than the statistics of the wait itself."

While humans generally don't like to wait, there are certain things that can be done to make waiting feel less painful. According to [BMC Health Services Research](#), "These include: 1) proactively informing patients of delays, 2) explicitly apologizing for delays, and 3) providing opportunities for diversion."

From a patient perspective, virtual queue management platforms like [Waitwhile](#) capitalize on the third suggestion – providing opportunities for diversion. They automatically integrate key insights from empirical psychological research to **decrease perceived waiting time**.





How the brain waits

Ziv Carmon, a researcher at INSEAD, and behavior economist Daniel Kahneman [found that](#) memories of a queueing experience are strongly influenced by the final moments of a visitor's experience. When a wait ends on a good note, we tend to look back on it positively. But a negative last few minutes tends to color the entire waiting experience as having been unpleasant.

This notion is supported by over [10 years of research](#) by Qiuping Yu of the Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business. Over various studies, she found many interesting quirks to human behavior, such as the fact that people who wait longer than expected will actually take longer when their turn finally arrives. Based on her findings, there are **a few things that can be done** to improve the patient experience without having to overhaul the entire system.

Provide wait time estimates

In a study looking at baking call centers, Yu found that providing customers with wait times actually reduced the average wait time overall. That's because during congested times, customers who were less willing to wait abandoned the queue and returned during non-peak times. With fewer people queueing during peak hours, the average wait time was reduced for everyone while the total number of customers served remained constant. Although in healthcare, many patients have time-sensitive concerns, there are others with less pressing ailments who may opt to come in during a less crowded time of the day to curtail their anticipated wait time, reducing the average wait time for all.

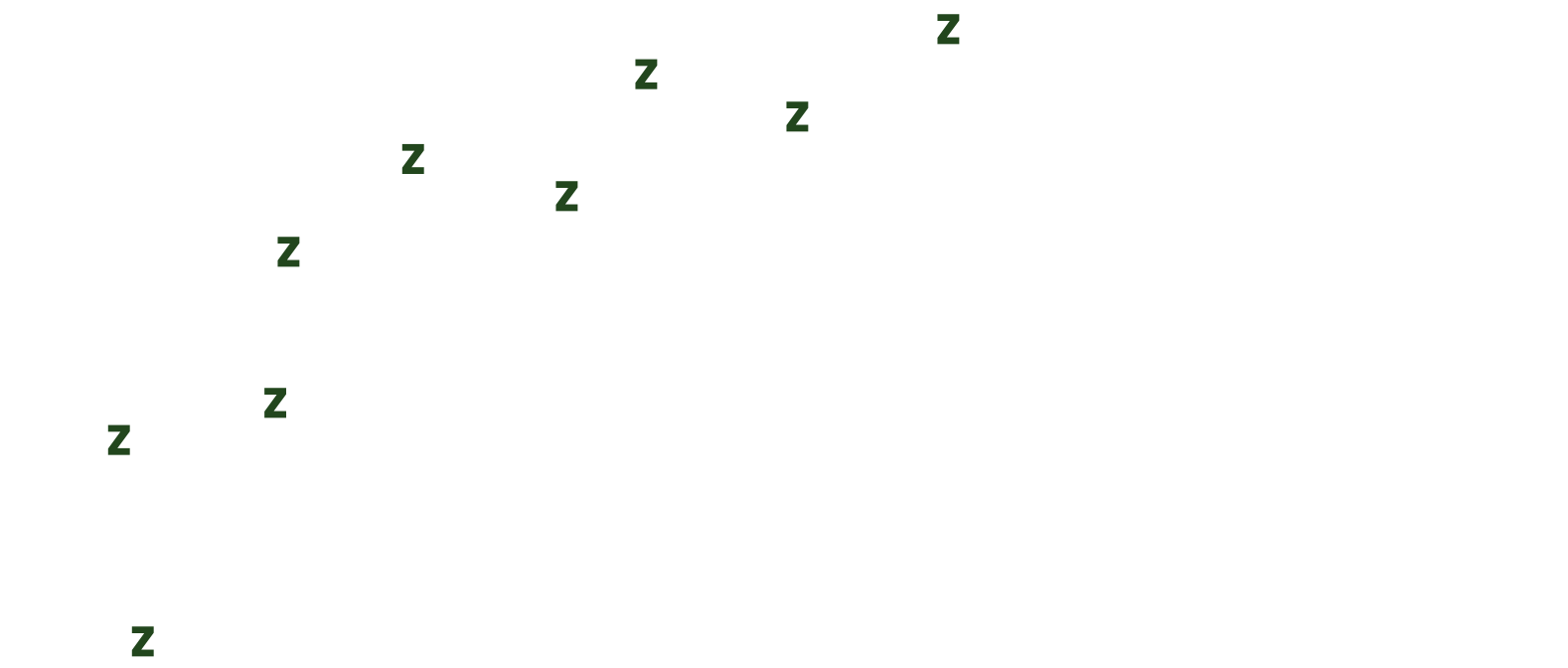
Overestimate wait times

In her research, Yu found that overestimating the wait time (delivering a wait time estimate that's longer than the actual wait time) had a positive impact on customer experience. It's no surprise that people enjoy when things move quicker than anticipated. The opposite is also true, though. In cases where waits were longer than initially expected, Yu measured a significant negative impact on customer satisfaction. One easy way to improve the patient experience is to overestimate rather than underestimate how long the wait will be.

Keep patients in the loop

Expecting to have to wait a long time is one thing, but not knowing how long that wait may be is far more frustrating. People feel more in control when they know what to expect. They value transparency, even if it's bad news. In a study that looked at rideshare queues, Yu found that providing frequent progress updates improved customer experience. Even when long wait times were quoted, users who were regularly updated about their status experienced "faster perceived progress".

How long it will take?



There’s another quirk to the human psychology of waiting to consider — the effect of **unoccupied time**. In [the early 2000s](#), executives at a Houston airport were inundated with complaints about long waits at baggage claim. Even after they hired more staff and reduced the wait to an average of 8 minutes, the complaints continued. After a strategic analysis, the executives found that the walk from the arrival gates to the baggage claim area was only a minute long. In response, the airport moved the gates further out and routed bags to the most distant carousel, increasing the time it took to walk from plane to baggage claim from 1 to 6 minutes. The complaints about long waits disappeared. There are myriad sayings (“like watching paint dry”, “a watched pot never boils”), that illustrate the fact that waiting feels much longer when there’s nothing to do.

This experiment is a great real-world demonstration of one of David Maister’s [“Psychological Principles of Waiting”](#): when people have nothing to do (“unoccupied time”), the wait feels longer than it actually is. By turning the previously unoccupied time (standing around waiting) into “occupied time” (walking from the gate to the baggage carousel), the Houston airport executives were able to completely eliminate the experience of waiting for their visitors.

This can be applied in a healthcare setting, too. There are always forms to fill out, questionnaires to complete, or record updates to be made. And with a [virtual queue management system](#), patients can wait from anywhere, giving them the freedom to do whatever they’d like while knowing their place in the queue is safe. The unoccupied time of

sitting in a waiting room can now be occupied by whatever the patient wants to do (e.g., grabbing a bite to eat, running an errand, or delaying their arrival until it’s almost their turn).

When people have nothing to do, the wait feels longer than it actually is.

Better waiting experiences improve overall operations

The empirically-supported tactics outlined in this section go a long way to improving patient waiting experiences and reducing overall wait times. The best part is that **a positive waiting experience has cascading benefits**. Patients are less likely to be frustrated when they interact with staff, streamlining overall patient flow and reducing the burden on both staff and operations.

The beauty of a virtual queue management system like [Waitwhile](#) is that it's built to automatically integrate the psychological principles of waiting. Patients can see an accurate (slightly pessimistic) wait estimate, join a virtual queue to wait from anywhere, and then get automatic updates on their

queue status throughout their wait. On the backend, a queue management system is key to unlocking operational efficiency and successfully managing multiple and diverse queues simultaneously (which is crucial for the healthcare industry).

In the next section, we'll explore the full scope of benefits that a virtual queue management system offers to the healthcare industry. Not only can it solve for the problem of long wait times and increase patient satisfaction, but a great queue management platform can **fully transform the way facilities operate**, automating key elements of the patient flow.



Virtual Queue Management in Healthcare

The upside of going digital

A virtual queue management solution like [Waitwhile](#) lets patients join a line remotely or make an appointment for a future date. There are usually multiple ways to do this: from a kiosk in your reception area, via a link on a website, or by simply sending a text message or scanning a QR code.

Once patients have signed up, they can wait anywhere and do anything they like — so waiting doesn't really feel like waiting at all. Plus, patients can always see their wait time or status in the queue so they stay in the know.

In a [2021 study of virtual queues](#), researchers at Vanderbilt and California State University found that:

- Virtual queues **reduce customers' pre-service complaints** about wait times by nearly 25%.
- Virtual queues **enhance overall satisfaction** with an 11% increase in online ratings on average.
- The effects of implementing a virtual queueing system are lasting. According to the researchers, the impacts of a virtual queue can be seen immediately and are **sustained long term**.

Visits					Search	
Waitlist						
34 parties · 20 min estimated wait						
	Name	Resource	Service	Waited		
1	Chance Torff	Abraham	Lab Radiology	29 min		
2	Martin Curtis	Kajsa	Pharmacy Physical	27 min		
3	Cheyenne Kenter	Edvin	Pharmacy Lab	27 min		
4	Jordyn Kenter	Kajsa	Physical	23 min		
5	Kierra Dokidis	Abraham	Pharmacy	17 min		
6	Ruben Herwitz	Edvin	Radiology Physical	16 min		
7	Jaylon Baptista	Abraham	Physical	30 min		

How virtual queues boost patient satisfaction

Virtual queues turn the traditional waiting process on its head. While patients may still have to wait, the waiting becomes productive and gives them more control over their time.

Waiting is productive

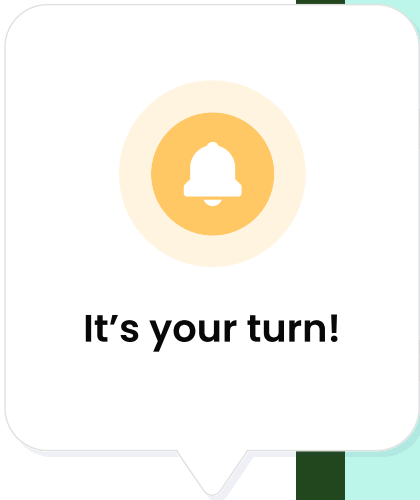
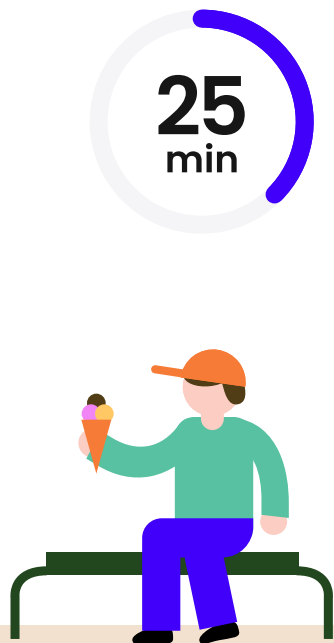
A virtual queue eliminates the need to stand in a physical line. Imagine if patients could “line up” to pick up their prescription at the pharmacy while finishing up at the doctor’s office and get there as their order was being called instead of having to sit in a waiting area the entire time. The same process can be applied in any healthcare setting ranging from a specialits’s office to a major clinic.

Patients are in control

Queue management platforms utilize the psychology of waiting by making sure patients don’t have much unoccupied waiting time and by keeping them in the know at all times. Patients can always check to see how much time is left before it’s their turn and can fill out forms or enjoy a walk rather than being chained to a spot in a waiting area. Instead of feeling frustrated, they feel like they’re in control.

Service is faster

Whether you’re at a hospital or seeing a specialist, there’s always paperwork to fill out, update, or read. With a queue management platform, you can ask patients to take care of it all while they wait, which saves time when the doctor is ready to see them. You can also ask them to fill our surveys, detail their symptoms, or answer questions that will speed up the service process.



The broad benefits of virtual queue management

As you can probably already tell, a virtual queue management system will energize your operations beyond the queueing experience. Here are just some of the benefits you can expect.

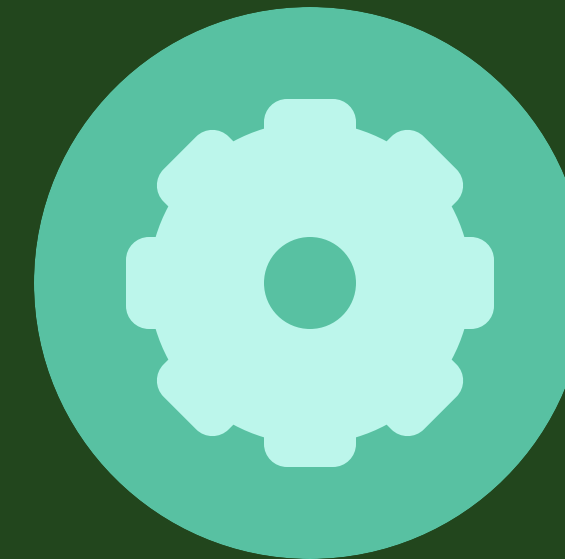
Automation

Virtual queue management systems automate all aspects of managing any number of lines. None of your staff will have to worry about updating patients on their wait status or even summoning patients when it's their turn.

Additionally, advanced queue management platforms like [Waitwhile](#) have built-in features that manage your queues for you. Whether your facility operates on a walk-in or appointment-only basis (or you take both), your queue management system can **centrally manage your patient flow**.

Because triaging is critical in most healthcare settings, you can rest assured that you can reorganize the queue on the backend to treat critical patients first. This reshuffling is often unpredictable, but an AI-powered virtual queue management platform can account for these shifts ahead of time to still deliver accurate wait time estimates to all patients.

As we mentioned earlier, part of the reason that long waits are so common in most healthcare settings (especially hospitals) is because of the necessity to coordinate patient hand-off between different departments. As you're evaluating queue management solutions, be sure to investigate the integrations offered by each vendor. You'll want to choose a solution that can integrate with any systems already at use at your facility so that all aspects of your patient flow are seamless. The best solutions will have an API with [extensive documentation](#).



Visitor communication

Because a virtual queue is — well — virtual, you unlock a reliable line of communication with your patients when they join your queue. Your staff will be able to alert patients of delays, ask them to complete paperwork, and remind them of future appointments after they leave.

You'll be able to choose a mode of communication that makes the most sense for your business. Or let your guests choose whether they prefer to be reached via **SMS, email, push notifications, or voice messages**.

Because communication is digitized, you can reduce the number of staff it takes to manage your waiting patients. Visitors have an easy way to reach you, and your staff can answer questions and send personalized updates to always keep patients in the loop.

For repeatable communications (like status updates, patient intake forms, and appointment reminders), your virtual queue management system can deploy messages automatically — saving everyone valuable time.



Operational analytics

A virtual queue management system like [Waitwhile](#) automatically logs operational data as you use it. It uses **machine learning** to understand your operations and propose improvements. The longer you use it, the more fine-tuned the recommendations become.

You'll be able to see when your practice is busiest, which staff members and services are most in-demand, and more. With easy-to-understand analytics, your staff can uncover operational snags as they happen so your team feels empowered to make real-time decisions to get back on track. And, you can segment the data by any visitor identifier to uncover cohort trends — just decide what kind of information you'd like to collect from your guests when they check in.

From a patient satisfaction standpoint, you can surface correlations between wait times, no-show rates, and satisfaction. You can then use your virtual queue management platform to set goals. For example, you may be able to learn that if you reduce your wait time by 7 minutes, your patient satisfaction score will increase by 25%.

Using these data points, you can make operational decisions about things like staff and resource distribution or operating hours that have a direct positive impact on patient satisfaction rates.

Post-visit follow-ups

The patient journey doesn't end when they've said goodbye. A virtual queue management system helps to make patients feel like they're more than just a number with personalized follow-up messages to make them feel cared for, cultivating repeat visits and positive reviews.

Plus, when they come back for another visit, **historical notes and preferences** will be stored so your staff can effortlessly deliver an elevated and personalized experience that your patient won't soon forget.



Virtual Queue Best Practices

Here are some tips from [Waitwhile customers](#) on how to make sure your virtual queues are delivering on all fronts:

- Make sure you have a **reliable WiFi connection** so your patients can easily access your virtual queue, especially if the cell phone coverage in your area or building isn't the strongest.
- Hold a **training session** for your staff on how to use your virtual queueing platform to ensure everyone is on the same page. See if your virtual queue provider can run the training or has existing material you can use.
- Regularly **survey your staff** to learn of ways to improve their satisfaction with your queueing system.
- Gather **feedback from patients** so you can spot any snags and continue to elevate your visitor experience.

How Virtual Queue Management Works: Step-by-step

There are five basic steps to the patient journey: arrival, the queue, service, departure, and follow-up. Though at first it may seem like a virtual queue only addresses the first half of the journey, digital queue management actually brings efficiency and expediency to the entire visit.

Here's how it works, step-by-step.

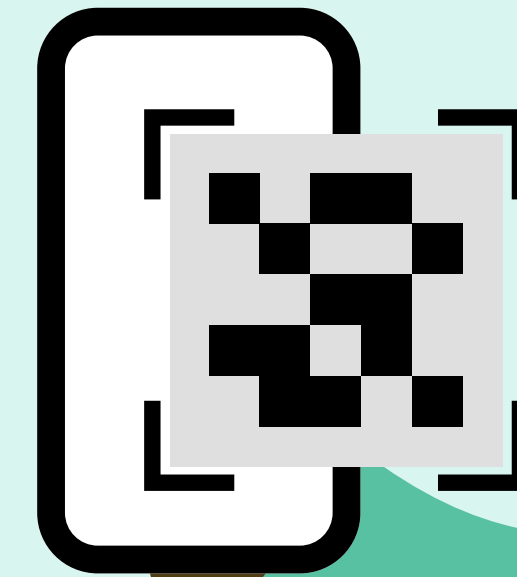
The Arrival

Visitors can join your queue virtually and wait from anywhere. This flexibility allows you to provide the check-in options that make the most sense for your operations. On-site, you can utilize kiosks or QR codes that visitors can access with their phones. You can also let guests join a queue via text message.

If you want to provide the option for guests to join a queue before arriving at your location, you can link to your virtual waitlist on your website or — with [Waitwhile](#) — even on your Google Maps listing. Additionally, you can geofence your virtual queue. That way, only guests that are within a specified radius of your location will be able to sign up.

Your check-in screen can be as detailed as you want. Collect the information you need to speed up the whole visit and even allow patients to pay for things like copays ahead of time. If you want to move certain patients to the front of the line, you can flag them automatically without anyone else in the queue seeing the preferential treatment.

Your virtual queue(s) can also integrate seamlessly with your [appointment calendar](#). With both walk-ins and bookings centralized in a single system, you have the flexibility to adopt the operating model that makes the most sense for your needs.



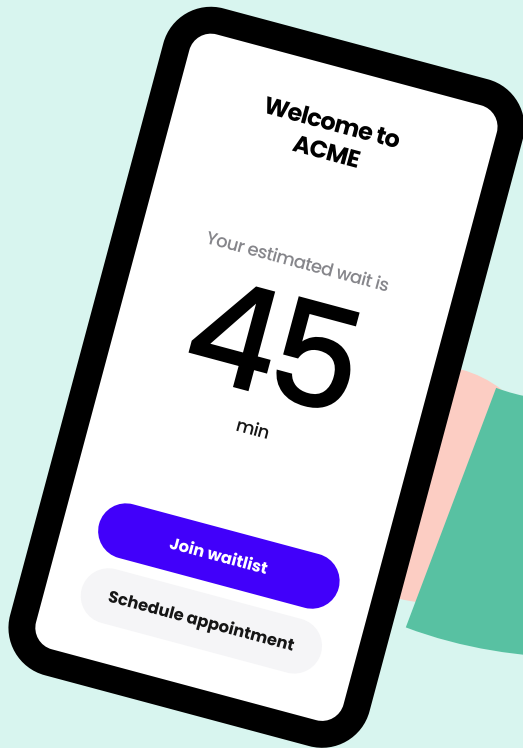
The Queue

When a patient joins your virtual waitlist, they get a precise wait time estimate. Studies have shown that transparency is key to increasing customer satisfaction. A virtual queue management solution will be upfront about the expected wait and automatically update your visitors throughout the process.

In [Waitwhile](#), accurate wait times are delivered using machine learning. They're tailored to your unique operations, eliminating the chance of human error. If anything changes, estimates are updated in real time and patients are automatically notified.

You'll also be able to relay important information beyond wait time estimates throughout the queueing process – and keep the line of communication open. In a virtual queue, visitors can send questions or update you on their status (e.g., if they're running late) directly via text.

With accurate wait time estimates, patients are free to wait from anywhere. And you get to choose whether or not you want patients to see where they are in line. You decide whether to make the entire virtual waitlist (and wait estimates) visible to everyone on their personal devices or displayed on a monitor in your physical waiting area.



The Service

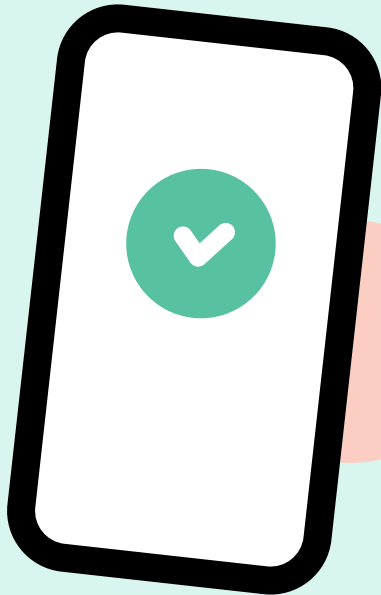
When you're ready for a patient, send them a notification via SMS or email with a click. With pre-programmed messages, your employees will simply have to click a button to deploy detailed, personalized notifications.

Because a virtual queue seamlessly integrates the insights from the queueing psychology research discussed earlier, your patients are going to already be impressed with the level of care and attention provided when it's their turn. In fact, they're likely to feel like their wait wasn't bad at all.

4 Departure

Once a visit is complete, you mark the patient as “served” in your virtual queue management system. If there are multiple steps to your service process (e.g., the patient has to go to the lab or visit the pharmacy), the patient can automatically be entered into any additional queues as required (and then repeat the process from Step 1).

Once the patient’s visit is complete, your virtual queue management system will log important data about the visit, such as total visit time, and automatically feed that information into an analytics dashboard. You can use these data points to spot critical trends at any number of locations and make meaningful changes to your operations to improve overall patient flow.



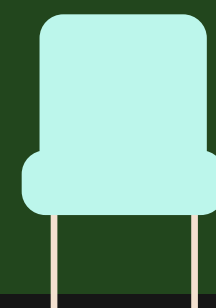
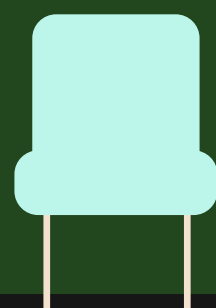
5 Follow-up

Any notes staff may have taken about the patient will be logged to their profile so you can keep track of important details.

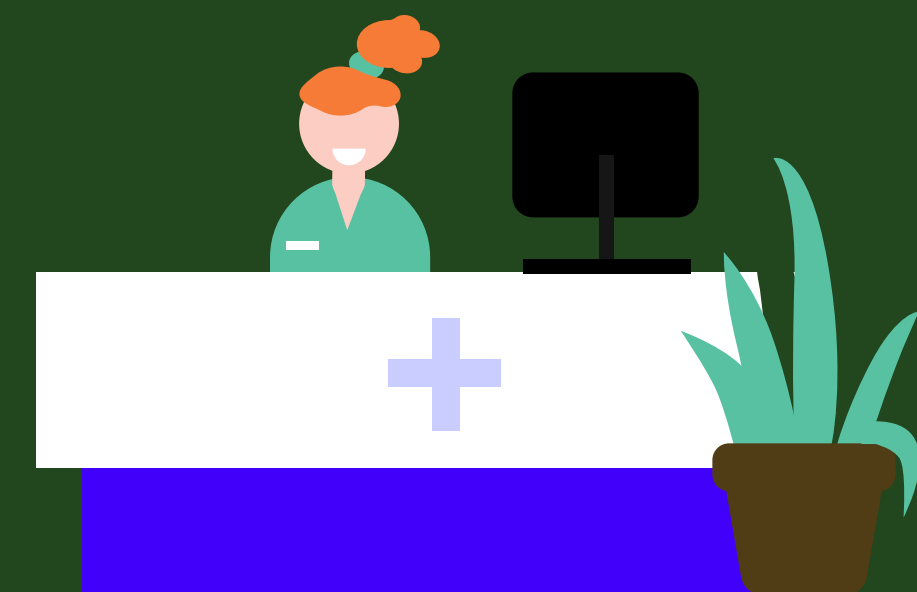
To keep the conversation going post-visit and generate repeat business, you can also automatically deploy patient communications via text or email. Thank the patient for coming as a nice personalized touch. Send them a reminder to schedule a follow-up. Encourage them to leave a review or fill out a survey — or solicit feedback to improve your operations.

Case Studies: Successful Queue Management Implementations

4



12



ModernMD

ModernMD Urgent Care uses Waitwhile's queue management system to facilitate safe, streamlined patient management. This NYC urgent care group reported that 1 in 3 patients would not have come in were it not for Waitwhile.



85K+
patients served

8
urgent care centers

4.8/5
patient satisfaction

About ModernMD

ModernMD Urgent Care is the premier urgent care group in Brooklyn, New York where providing the right care in the right neighborhood-based healthcare setting is paramount to the patient's holistic experience. ModernMD focuses on equalizing access to quick and convenient healthcare in communities that had previously lacked access to healthcare outside of the emergency room.

The Challenge

During the pandemic, ModernMD was in the thick of treating an ever-growing number of COVID patients and providing rapid COVID testing. They needed a solution for managing increasingly long lines of patients outside their offices.

As an urgent care network, ModernMD had been walk-in only, a model that worked well pre-COVID. To ensure patients had immediate access to the urgent care they needed, ModernMD was open late into the night, seven days a week. But with COVID-related social distancing constraints and increased patient volume and wait times, patients and staff were having to wait outside in front of urgent care centers while the weather grew increasingly colder. ModernMD's walk-in model was quickly becoming unsustainable.

Given that wait times during the height of the pandemic were averaging two to three hours, ModernMD began to look for a platform that would allow patients to register and wait from anywhere.



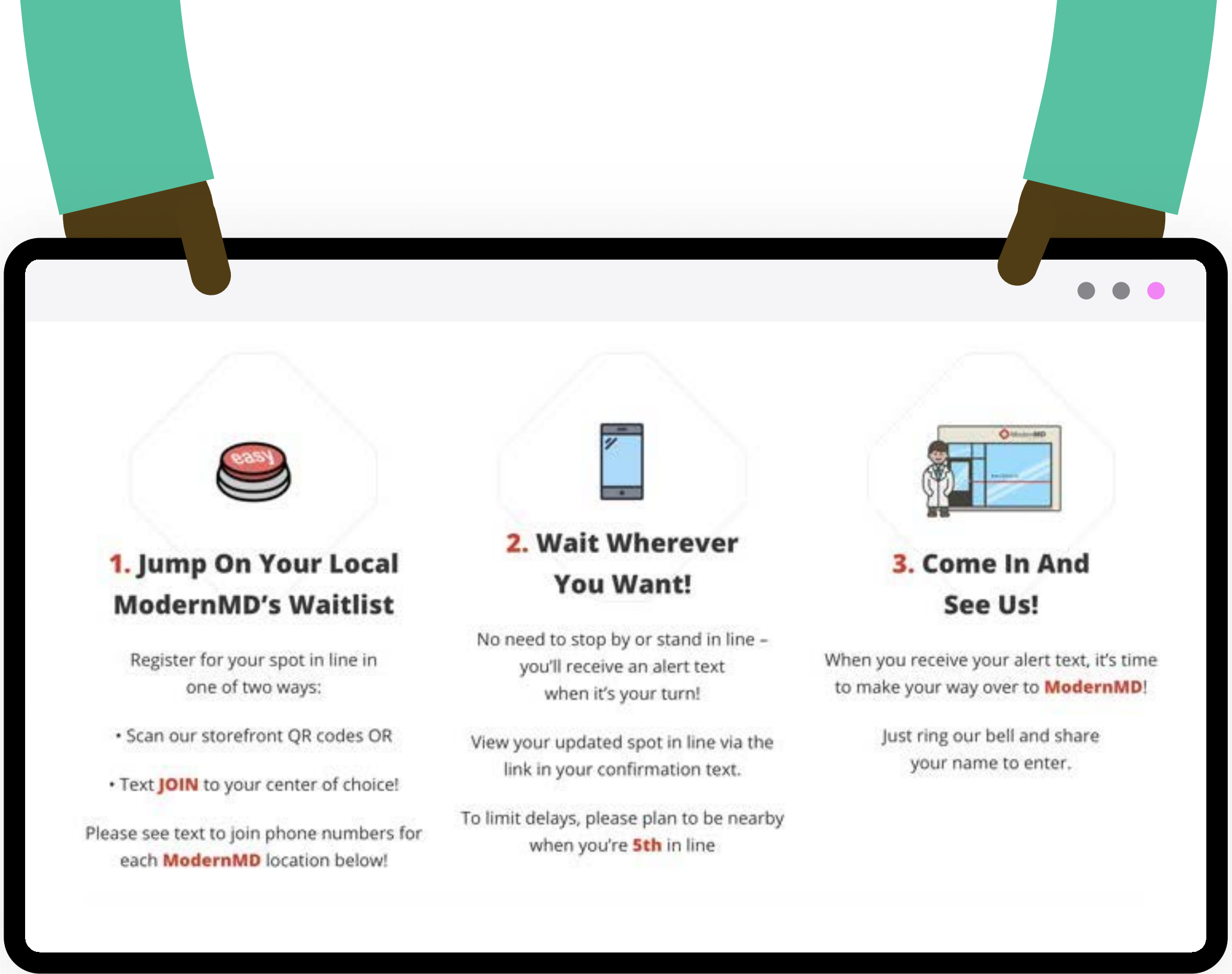
The Solution

ModernMD started using Waitwhile's [virtual waitlist](#) to improve their patient experience. Now, instead of having to physically line up outside in the cold, patients could wait comfortably from wherever was convenient for them. Using Waitwhile also allowed the ModernMD team to see the exact number of patients waiting and get a quick overview of their needs, making it possible to prioritize certain patient types.

Waitwhile offers multiple communication features, but for ModernMD, being able to reach out to patients via text message to ask clarifying questions or give additional information prior to their appointments proved to be a real game changer. The medical facility was also able to add custom patient intake fields during the check-in process that asked about insurance and gave information that could greatly affect the cost and quality of visits. Because patients now knew exactly what to expect, they were able to make informed decisions about whether to come in or not in advance.

At first, ModernMD was concerned that less tech-savvy patients would have a hard time getting used to scanning a QR code in order to register and would continue standing in physical lines while more tech-savvy people got to wait from the comfort of their homes. But with the introduction of the text-to-join feature (the ability to register via text message) this concern was resolved.

Another feature that proved valuable was Waitwhile's data collection functionality, which ModernMD used to identify the percentage of no-shows and cancellations — information that they used to better predict patient volume on a daily basis. They were also able to better prioritize care after gaining a clearer understanding of the spread of conditions patients presented with — how many patients were seeking COVID testing versus treatment for an illness or injury.



The Result

ModernMD attributes a large part of their success from Q3 2020 onward to having Waitwhile as a differentiator for their patients. After a challenging first pandemic winter, they saw continued and sustained growth in visitor volume, revenue, and patient satisfaction.

Perhaps most importantly, the implementation of Waitwhile did a lot to boost ModernMD's employee morale. ModernMD is able to now rely on their queue management system to create a better understanding of patient needs, improve waiting room management, automate capacity monitoring, and triage the most severe cases — resulting in a more positive experience for employees and patients alike.

“We have received hundreds and hundreds of positive reviews about our waitlist platform and the resulting patient experience and level of satisfaction. Within three months of implementing Waitwhile, we were back to pre-COVID levels of patient satisfaction.”

Melissa Cohen, VP Marketing & Business Growth at ModernMD Urgent Care

Hartford HealthCare

Connecticut’s Hartford HealthCare hospitals use Waitwhile as a communication platform to provide surgery updates to waiting family and friends.

99%

visitor satisfaction

5

year partnership

About HealthCare

Hartford HealthCare is Connecticut’s most comprehensive healthcare network. Its unique Institute Model offers a single, high standard of care in crucial specialties at hospital and ambulatory sites across the state. Hartford HealthCare has relied on Waitwhile since 2017 to keep patients’ relatives well informed when they are waiting in often stressful and high anxiety situations.

The Challenge

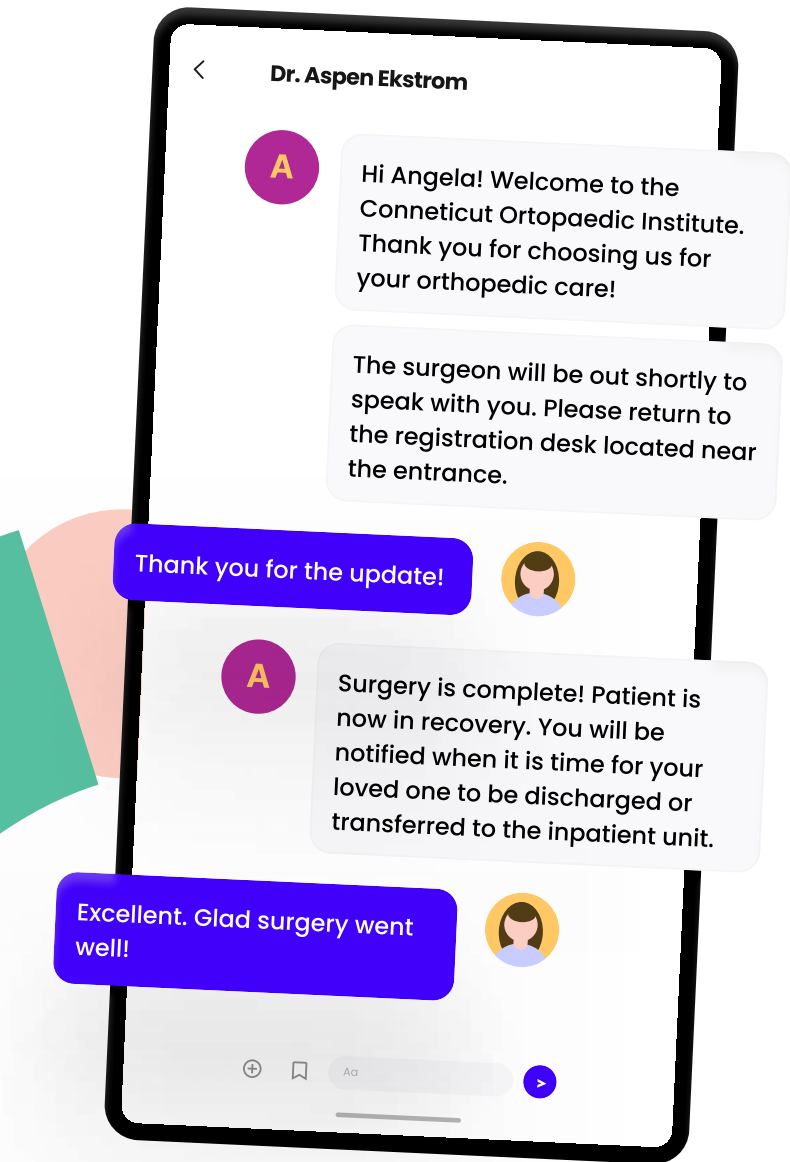
In 2017, Hartford HealthCare’s Connecticut Orthopaedic Institute (COI) realized that a critical component of achieving its goal of providing exceptional service and visitor satisfaction was improving communications with the patients and their family members. Hartford HealthCare now uses Waitwhile to keep an open line of communication with patients, family members, and other loved ones.

COI leadership recognized that communicating with interested parties throughout surgical care could alleviate confusion, stress, and worry. The team began looking for tools that would make the communication process easier for both the medical staff and loved ones alike. They found Waitwhile and began working to build the optimal system for their needs.



The Solution

Using Waitwhile’s queue management and messaging features, COI is able to keep family members and visitors updated throughout the perioperative period. The primary feature that COI relies on is Waitwhile’s ability to send automated messages throughout the surgical process — updating loved ones on the patient’s status. The team at COI set up an automated information path that communicates key care milestones via text message to family members from intake to recovery.



The Result

Waitwhile has greatly improved the patient and visitor experience, and helped improve satisfaction rates by providing real-time communications so everyone can stay up to date on their loved one’s medical procedures.

Since Waitwhile was incorporated into Hartford HealthCare’s operations, reviews from family members have been consistently positive. People feel that they’re “kept in the know” with greater regularity and clarity compared to any other medical institutions they’ve visited in the past.

Even minor surgical procedures can create concern and worry. By keeping loved ones informed every step of the way, Waitwhile reduces anxiety, worry, and unease. Patients undergoing procedures feel calmer, too, knowing their family is being kept in the loop. For operating room staff, Waitwhile automation features have added key efficiencies to the information sharing process. By making communication feasible and clear, everyone involved has a better overall experience.

“Waiting for family members during surgery can be stressful. Our teams love Waitwhile because it brings empathy into a difficult process.”

Andrew Turczak
Managing Director, Hartford HealthCare



Shorten the wait. Make patients happy.

Waitwhile is a digital queue management platform that helps healthcare facilities deliver better waiting experiences for their guests through virtual queueing and easy appointment scheduling. Waitwhile lets visitors wait from anywhere and track their status in real-time online — while helping organizations automate patient flows, reduce wait times, and speed up operations with machine-learning.

Used by thousands of companies across every industry around the world, Waitwhile has saved 150+ million people more than 10,000 years of waiting in line.

[Schedule demo](#)

[Or learn more >](#)

