The Problem
- Hematology/Oncology ambulatory patients require blood draws and vital signs prior to their provider appointments.
- The patient intake system was siloed. Dedicated Practice Assistants drew blood, and others record vital signs.
- These distinct processes required patients to get up from their waiting room chair multiple times to receive labs and vitals. For a large volume clinic, this led to a chaotic waiting-room environment and general confusion.
- Lack of an effective communication system resulted in Providers and Practice Assistants unclear as to the current status of the patients.

Aim/Goal
To improve the patient experience by implementing a cohesive patient flow process. Guiding principles were to eliminate unnecessary patient movement about the waiting room, providing lab work and vital signs in single physical location by the same Practice Assistant, and foster clear communications amongst staff and providers ensuring patients were prepared for their appointments.

Ambulatory Hematology/Oncology Team
Kelly Noonan, Practice Manager
Tyler Britton, Practice Coordinator
Lorna Lynch, Patient Liaison
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The Interventions
- Created a primary care model of assigning 1-2 Practice Assistants to a single provider/clinic. Practice Assistants are responsible for vital signs, lab work, and flowing patients to exam rooms.
- Three new vital signs/lab work stations were created.
- Installation of wall-mounted bins labeled for providers/clinics – after a patient checks-in, their packet is placed in ‘Arrived’ bin, and when vitals/labs are complete the packet is placed in the ‘Completed’ bin.
- Dry-erase boards were mounted near exam room blocks to hold the daily schedules and to communicate patient flow status.
- A standardized key was implemented to denote patient status and to designate clinical needs (i.e. EKG, portacath access, etc).

The Results/Progress to Date
The diagrams visually depict the improvement to clinic flow & function:

Lessons Learned
- Previous process had many unnecessary, extra steps.
- Simplified communication resulted in improved interaction among the medical staff, patients, and providers.
- Patients are consistently prepared for provider visits both vitals and labwork.
- Patient movement was reduced, increasing patient satisfaction.
- Practice Assistant’s greater familiarity with assigned clinic, patients, and providers.

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next
- Support Practice Assistant’s while gaining comfort with the new process.
- Regular meetings with staff and providers to address issues.
- Review of end-of-visit checkout processes being for improved patient experience, and reducing wait times.
- Develop quantitative metrics to measure our success.