Improving Access to Care for Orthodontic Walk-in Patients

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National Dental Centre Singapore
SingHealth

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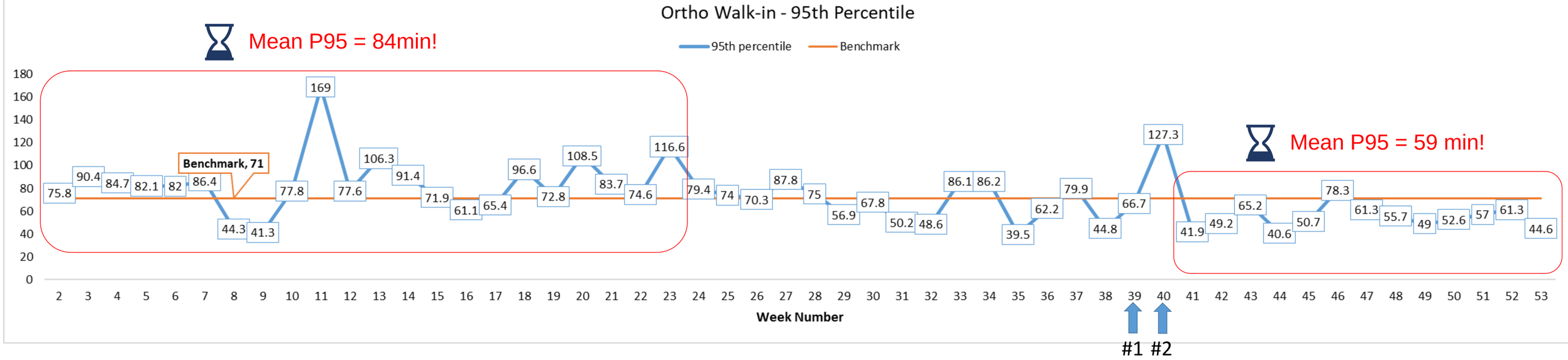
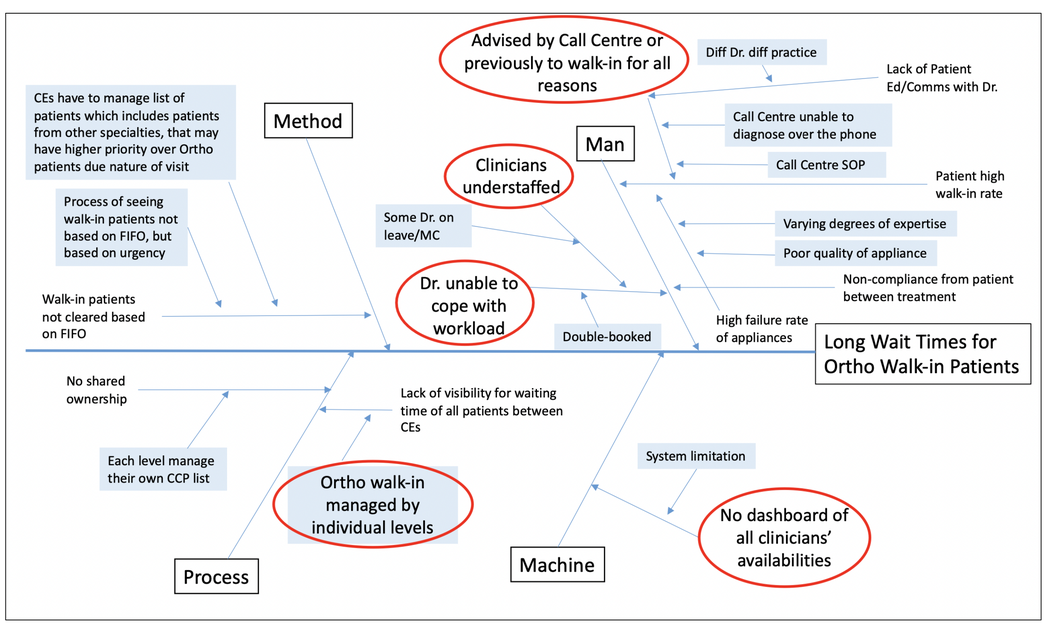


Introduction

Patients undergoing orthodontic/braces treatment may encounter problems with their appliances, causing them pain and discomfort. As such, they may walk-in without an appointment to have their problems addressed. However, the 95th percentile wait time for orthodontic walk-in patients (OWIP) was found to be extremely long, at 61-122min (mean = 84min) between January 2022 and May 2022

Objectives

1. Right-siting of care
2. Reduce the average 95th percentile wait time for orthodontic walk-in patients (OWIP) by 15% (from 84 minutes to 71 minutes)



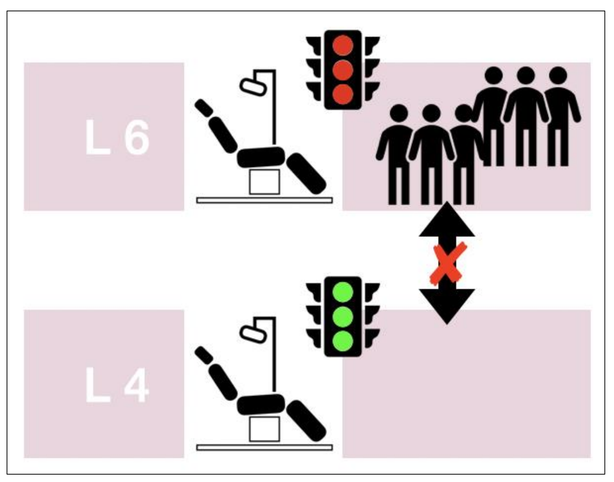
Methodology

A Cause-and-Effect Diagram and Pareto Chart narrowed down to 4 key causes:

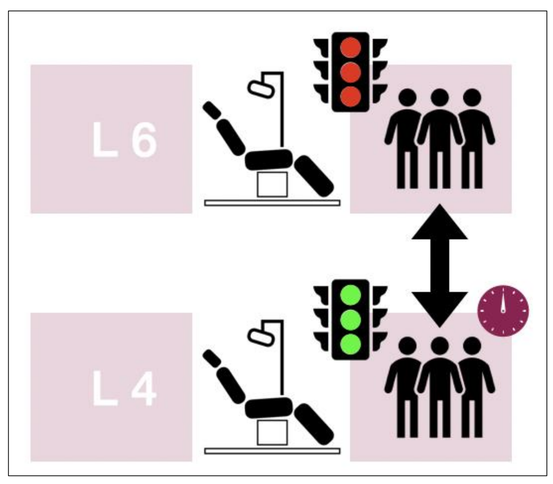
1. The call centre's standard operating procedure (SOP) was to advise patients walk-in regardless of urgency and at any time
2. There is lack of information regarding clinician's availability
3. OWIP are managed independently within each clinic and there is lack of effective inter-clinic communication
4. Department may be understaffed and clinicians are unable to cope with added walk-in patients, especially during peak periods

Two interventions were introduced:

1. 23 September 2022: Updated of call centre's SOP:
   - Triage and reduce incidence of non-urgent walk-in cases
   - Encourage patients to turn up during non-peak period
2. 3 October 2022: Establishment of new workflow for OWIP by creation of the Ortho Common Pool worklist
   - Provides oversight of the number of OWIP by creating a virtual queue
   - OWIPs are shared among clinicians within the whole of NDCS



BEFORE



AFTER

Results

The average 95th percentile wait time decreased from 84 minutes between January to May 2022, to 59 minutes between September to December 2022, representing a **30% reduction.**

Conclusion

95th percentile average wait time for OWIP decreased by 30%, saving patients an average of 25mins.

The project also resulted in a reduction in the variability of wait times for patients, hence giving them more certainty on how long they will expect to wait.