



Improving Access of Care through the Use of Reserved Fast Track Slots



Singapore General Hospital
SingHealth

Eugene Sim Junying, Singapore General Hospital
Lee Junhong, Singapore General Hospital
Puspalatah D/O Sathasivan, Singapore General Hospital
See Boon Hong, Singapore General Hospital
Tan Yean Fang, Singapore General Hospital
Tiffany Thng, Singapore General Hospital

INTRODUCTION

The SGH Orthopaedic Surgery department faces increasingly high demand for specialist advice. With limited availability of appointment slots, patients had to wait for long periods for their consultation appointments. This compromised patient safety as patients with severe conditions requiring urgent attention could not be seen by our specialists promptly.

As a result, a team comprising of members from both the Orthopaedic Surgery department and Specialist Outpatient Clinics (SOC) Operations was assembled to manage the waiting time to appointment (WTA) issue.

For this project, A&E slots were focused on due to the urgent nature of orthopaedic trauma patients. New case urgent referrals from A&E tended to be booked into slots with 1 or more patients already booked in (Figure 1). This overbooking of slots caused clinicians to have little time to properly review each patient. Clinicians expressed dissatisfaction with this, while patients were also unhappy with such a situation.

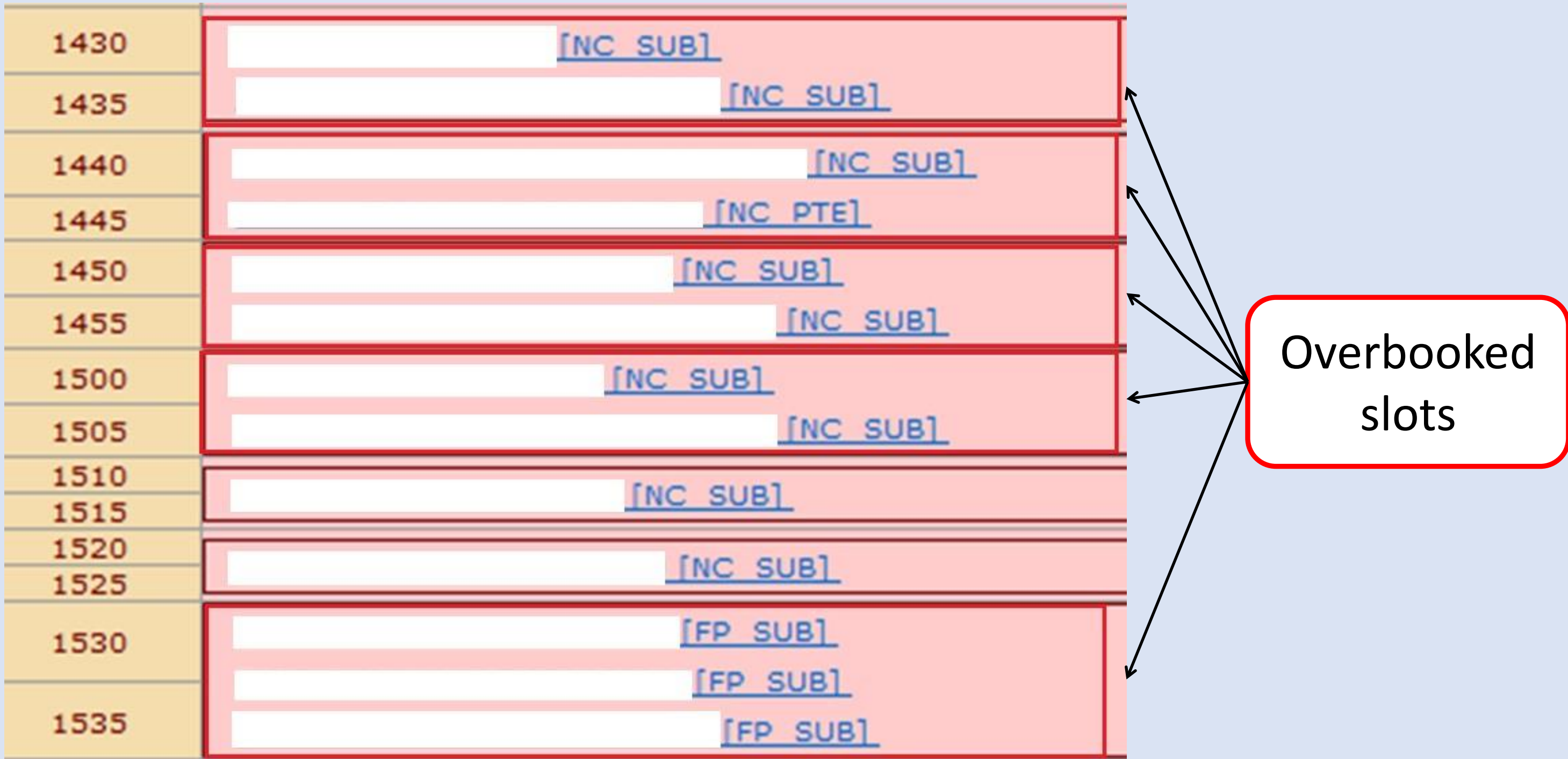


Figure 1: Appointments scheduled in a typical clinic catering to trauma patients, showing overbooking in the 5 slots boxed in red (patient's identities are removed)

OBJECTIVE

To reduce the percentage of urgent referrals being overbooked from 80% to 30% within 6 months

METHODS

The team started the project by looking at the reasons for the lack of slots for A&E referrals (Figure 2). Based on the results of this exercise, it was determined that the issues faced could be solved through the consolidation of A&E session and regulation of the use of such slots.

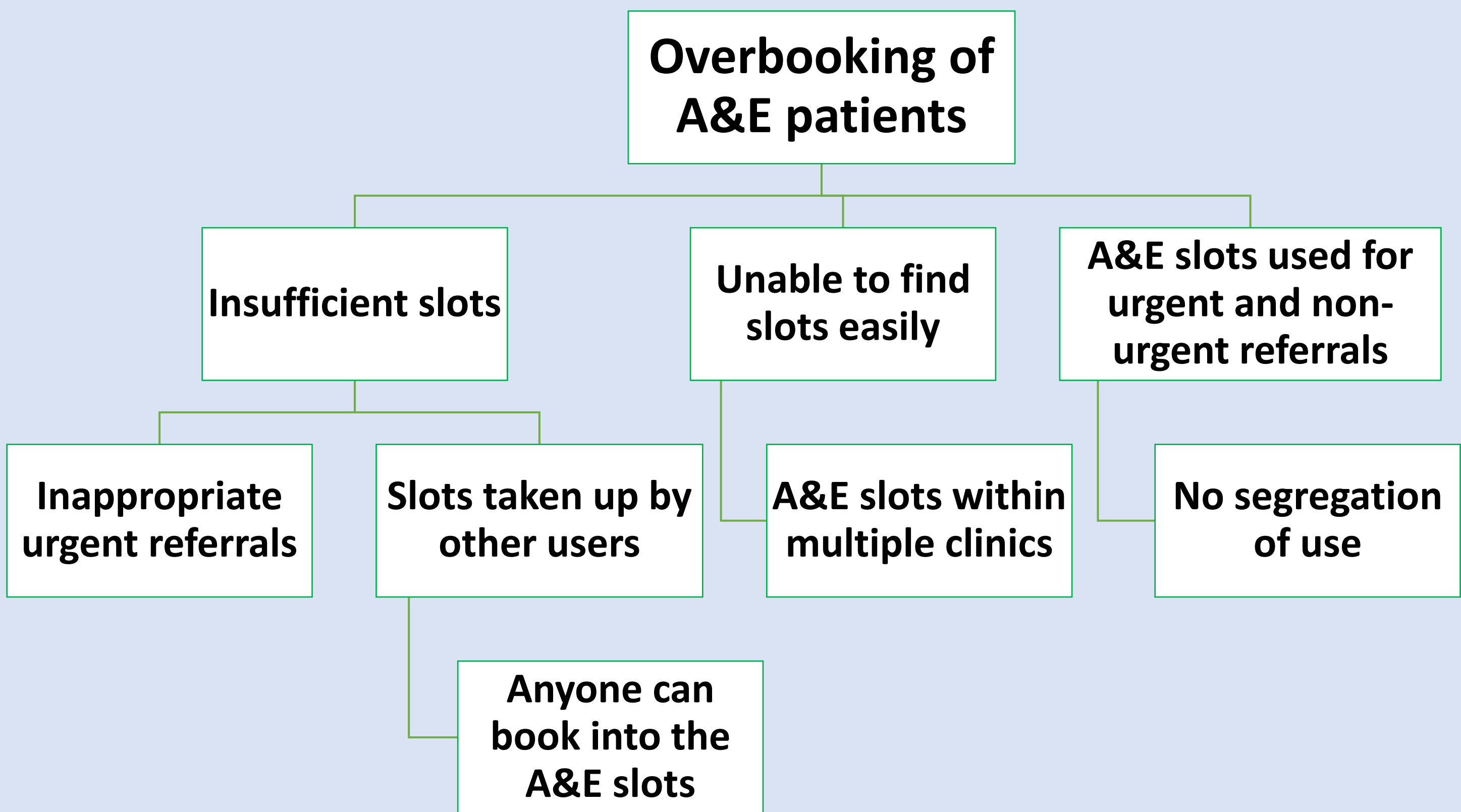
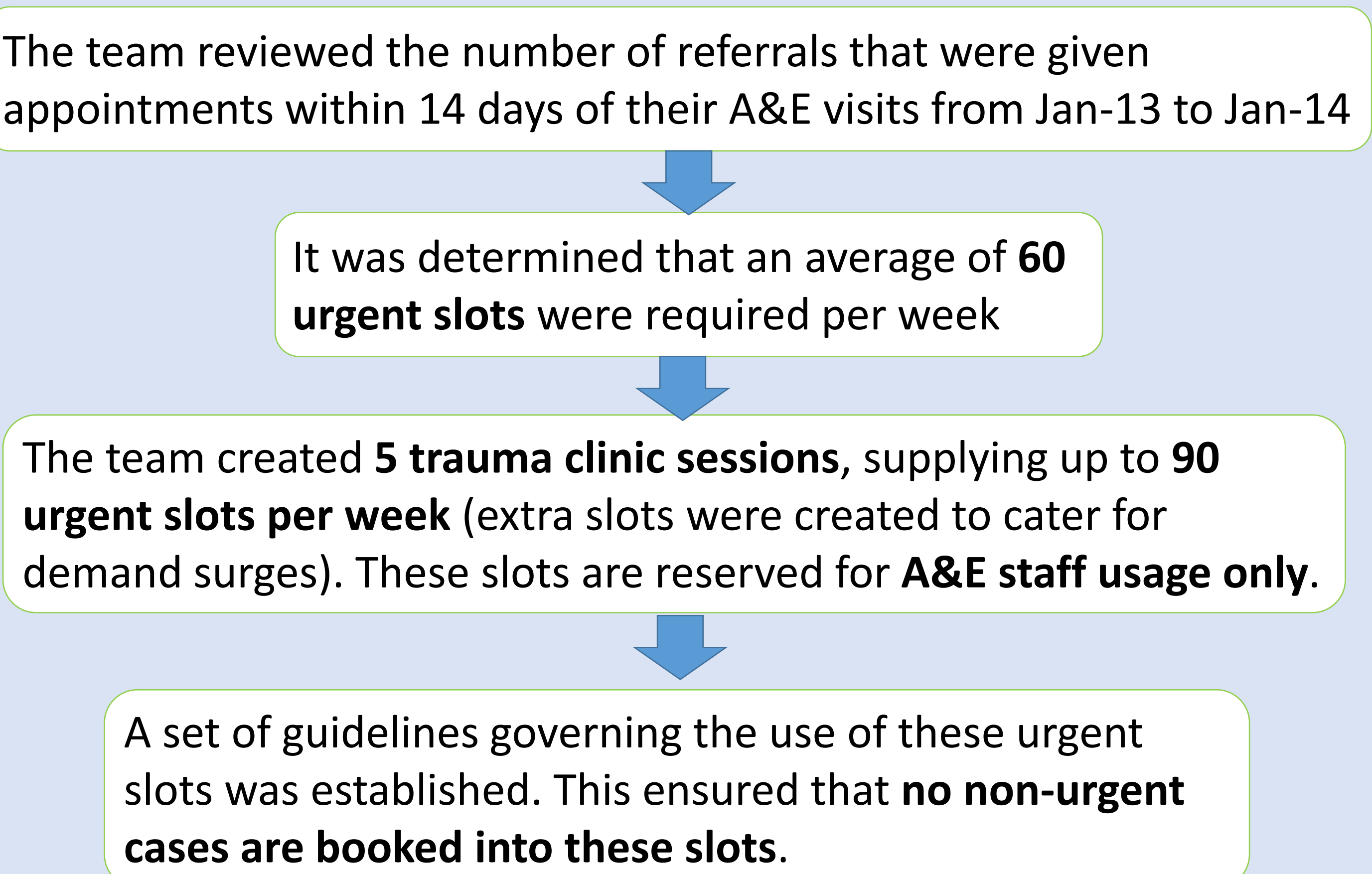


Figure 2: Tree diagram showing the reasons for overbooking of A&E patients into clinic slots.

INTERVENTIONS



RESULTS

Before the start of the project in Apr-14, the percentage of urgent referrals being overbooked into slots was around 78%. This subsequently **dropped significantly** to an average of **12%** (Figure 3).

A&E staff also reflected that it is easier to find and book appointments for patients, as all A&E slots has been consolidated under a single clinic name.

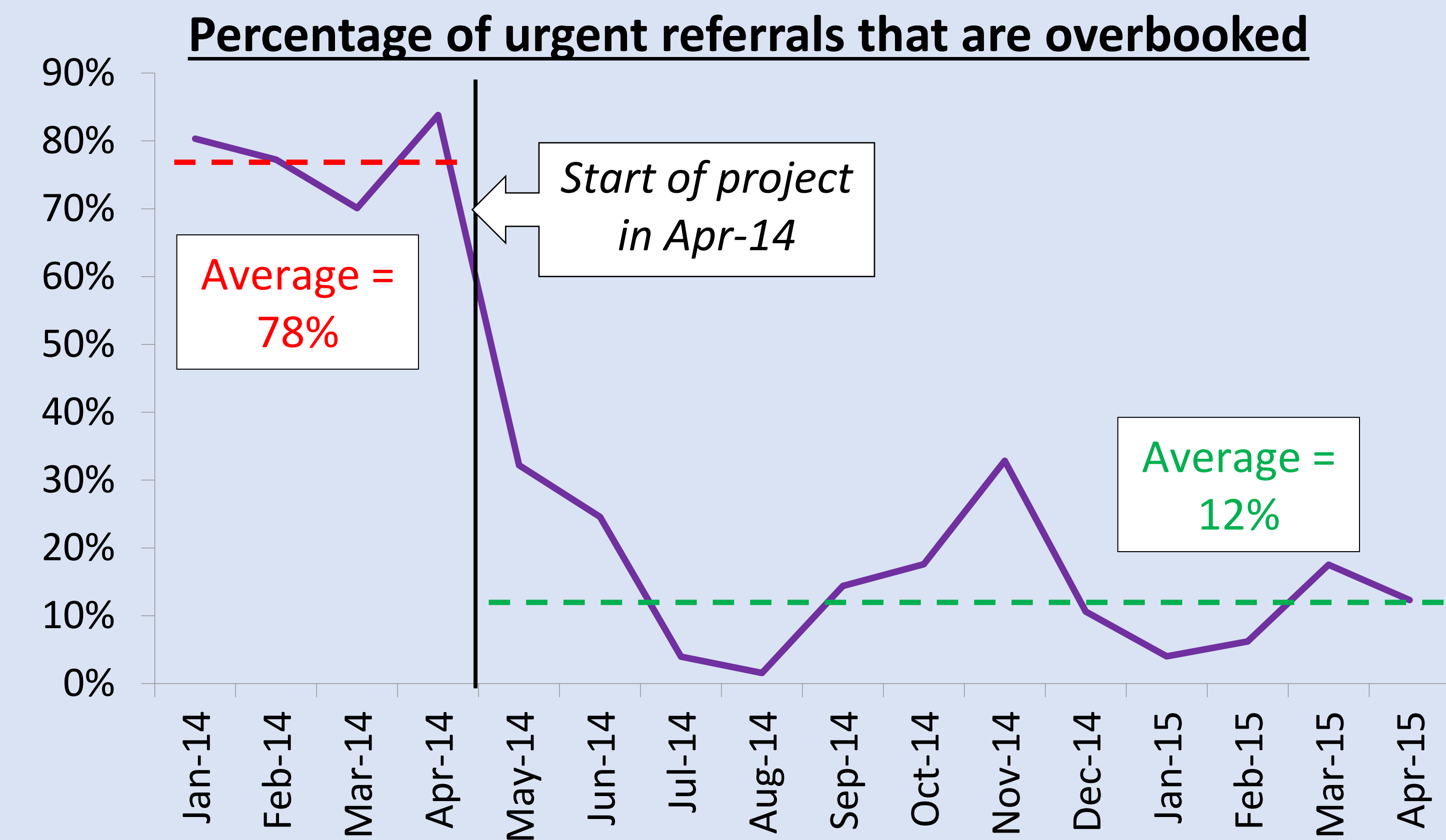


Figure 3: Percentage of urgent referrals from A&E are needed to be overbooked

CONCLUSION

While the numbers are encouraging, the team also acknowledges that the percentage of overbooked patients could fluctuate. This is due to surges in demand and changes in slot availability. However, these can be managed by having constant communication between the clinics and departments.

By understanding the underlying clinical and operational needs, new resource management processes can be developed that are targeted at solving appointment issues. In this instance, the team was able to devise a management plan that vastly improves a patient's access to care without negatively impacting operational needs or over-burdening the clinicians.

In an environment where demand outweighs supply, it is imperative to build systems and workflows that prioritises patient care according to case urgency and complexity, so that patients' needs are best met in a timely manner.