

Waiting Times in Hospitals

ASSESSMENT 1

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1. Introduction

It is a decent suggestion to keep in mind the present challenges facing the NHS, which is the Health system within the United Kingdom. You as a reader will find a number of the key stuff we should understand.

Key challenges, that are currently facing the Healthcare in the United Kingdom:

- Ageing population
- Growing population
- Higher needs in the Healthcare (Obesity, Diabetes, or antibiotics)
- Local services being closed
- Private services

Researchers came to the conclusion that due to the increased and sanctitude population beds in hospitals as much as staff (doctors, nurses, ...) and machinery will be on demand. The approximated number for the needed beds in hospitals only, by 2022, is 17,000. The government is trying to keep UK's National Health Services affordable. One option is to transfer the patient care away from the hospitals and into surgeries in addition in the region as well. However, this has a negative impact on hospital profits, pushing a number of them into debt. Also in past two years, several hospital institutions have also been put under control. Centralized service is a way for the government to try to solve the funding problem. However, this means closing some local services, such as emergency rooms and gynaecology hospitals. (The Medic Portal, n.d.)

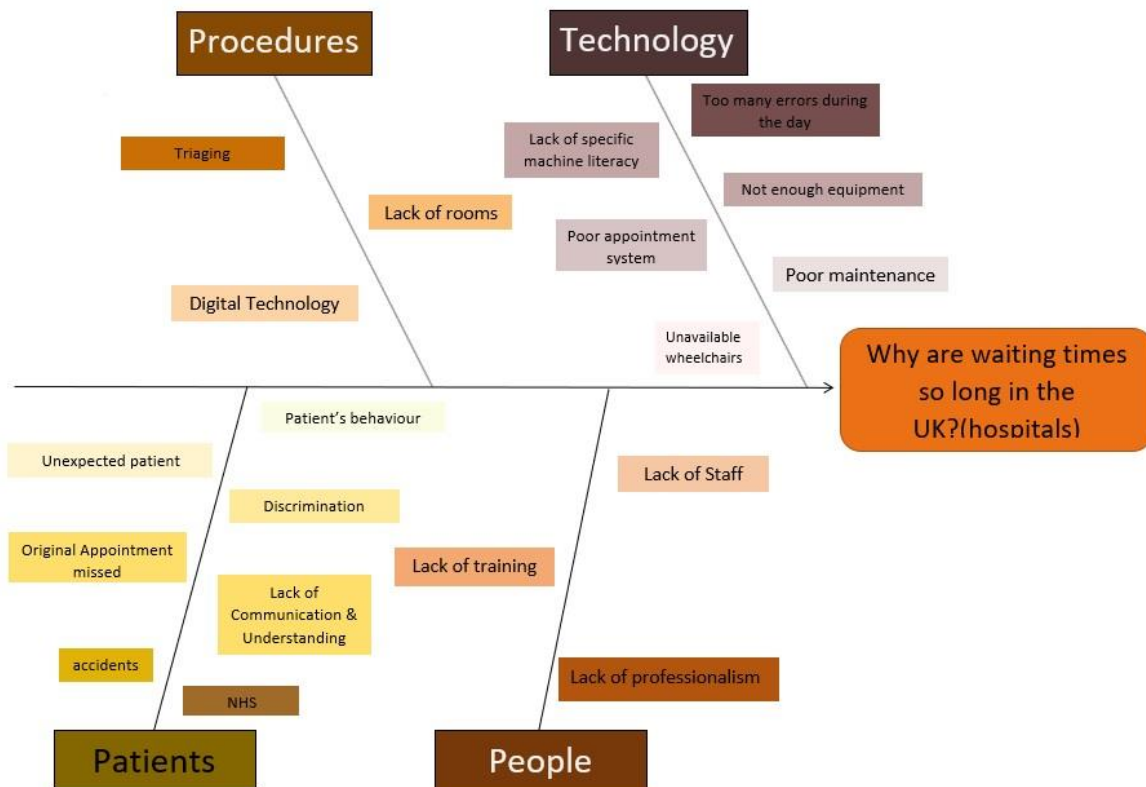
2. Problem statement

The patient waiting list in England has been longer than ever before since registration started, with almost 388,000 people waiting to begin service in a year. In February, data from the UK National Health Service revealed the health consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Millions of people are currently on the waiting list for hospitalisation, the largest number since August 2007. More people are waiting for 52 weeks or more than at every other time in the last 13 years. The number of patients admitted for emergency cancer treatment has also dropped by 8% in the last year. Compared to the same timeframe in 2019, prior to the pandemic, the number of patients requesting assistance decreased by 15,475, and the number of people attending emergency departments and emergency rooms

declined by 50,000 and by March it decreased by 503,913. (Booth, 2021) According to the UK's National Health Service, about 4.7 million people in the UK were waiting for regular surgeries and procedures in February, the highest number since 2007. Nearly 388,000 people waited for non-emergency surgery for more than a year, up from 1,600 people before the pandemic started. In January and February, Covid-19 hospitals were under, particularly pressure. The National Health Service of England said that despite the winter summit, 2 million operations were performed. However, the surgeon said that due to the second Covid wave, the hospital is still under tremendous pressure. As a result, patients waiting for planned treatment experienced a "year of uncertainty, pain, and isolation." Prime Minister Boris Johnson said during a visit to Dartmouth that the government will "ensure that we provide the National Health Service (NHS) with all the resources needed..." to fill this gap. He said that the situation has deteriorated due to Covid. "He added: "We need people to appoint and get the necessary treatment. NHS England recently announced that it has agreed to use these 1 billion pounds of funds to help the trust fund rebuild support institutions and other services to treat as many people as possible. As the second wave attracts attention, the National Health Service is expected to set a new record. By April, the number of waiting patients in the hospital may double to 10 million. Since 2008, the year-long elective surgery has looked terrible. Professor Stephen Powys, National Medical Director, National Health Service, UK. In the past year, 19 patients "inevitably had an impact on the NHS." Since the beginning of the pandemic, approximately 40% of all patients hospitalized for Covid have been hospitalized in the first two months of the year. But he said that "face to the hard work and dedication of employees" helped "face the winter wave" to cancel nearly 2 million operations and procedures. (BBC News, 2021) At least people with cancer in an urgent situation are starting to get their treatment again which they had stopped because of the high numbers of cases. (Trigg, 2020) Long waiting times can come from the very different sectors. According to my Fishbone Analysis the most important sectors are with in the technology and the people/staff. If there are too many errors during the working day the whole process slows down. Everyone or almost every worker should have machine literacy, so they do not depend on only few colleagues. For that there should be also enough equipment. With the missing equipment you will not be able to carry out the different investigations that are needed for the patient's diagnosis. The lack of equipment could also be the reason for a poor appointment system. When we talk about people, we have to think at the staff. The staff has to be skilled and competent enough to work with different patients. (Regulation 18: Staffing, no date) In a hospital if there is a lack of staff the waiting time is increasing a lot because of the duration of each procedure. All the staff within the hospital have to be trained correctly so they can help in every situation especially in emergencies. (

Health and safety legislation, n.d.) Very important for the workers side is the lack of professionalism. Not showing understanding and empathy for the patient. From the other side the behaviour of the patient could lead to longer waiting times, for example if he is not satisfied with the work that has been done or he was not in the "mood" since the beginning. The bad behaviour can also come from the long time the patient was waiting. Their behaviour can also change due to discrimination in the age or culture. Because of the different cultures we face everyday it comes very often to lack of communication and understanding. This can eventually happen when people do not master the language, in our case, English. If there is something connected to the culture the patient is coming from it comes to a low factor of understanding. As an unexpected patient in a hospital, you should calculate with very long waiting time, because the people with an appointment are having a privilege and most of the times you will have to wait until there is a free space for you. If you as an unexpected patient go in, because the original appointment was missed by someone else, then he will extent the waiting time even more. In the United Kingdom you can either visit a private hospital or NHS. The private clinics would be ready to take you quicker because whenever you need medical advice or treatment for a disease, you usually make an appointment with an NHS general practitioner. But depending on the number of people waiting in the same doctor's office, this can take up to two weeks or even longer. Waiting times vary by subject. However, in most cases, the NHS usually provides timely world-class services. Interventions for major life problems, such as heart bypass surgery. Now, most private health insurances provide you with access to a virtual therapist, and some even provide you with the option of choosing a private therapist. This means you will get diagnosed and treatment will begin as soon as possible. Even faster. (NHS Vs Private Healthcare) Since the beginning, large NHS units in England have performed the worst compared to the waiting time target, including the highest percentage of people who have waited more than four hours in the emergency room since 2004, and those who have waited longer The highest percentage exceeded expectations of 18 weeks. Survey data showed that more and more people are facing increasing delays in appointments. The longer the waiting time, the more people need treatment than the NHS can provide. This reflects the increase in funding over the past few decades, far under the NHS average, and the lack of assistance, as well as population growth and changing health needs. Due to cuts in social services and public health budgets, it is difficult for people outside the hospital to stay healthy. (NHS performance and waiting times, no date) The procedures for the different patients can extend because of the lack of rooms within the hospital. The time you have to wait can get longer due to triaging. Triage has different levels. Important and less important. There is an easier explanation of it, which is when you have a look at SWOT

Analysis. We have Important-Urgent; Important-but not urgent; Not Important-Urgent and not important-not urgent. According to these levels someone unexpected with an important and urgent situation will eventually go before someone with an appointment. (Appendix 1)



The PEST Analysis (Political, Economical, Sociological, Technological) show how the problems could be fixed. In the political section there can be given funds that will help more hospitals to be made. Younger people should be encouraged to work with in the healthcare sector, because of the lack of staff. From the economical sight more specialists should be hired or at least more staff with the provided training for many of the things. Patient could be reminded about their appointments, so they do not miss them. More equipment should be added, so the more people can use it. Applications should be made for the people in the waiting rooms for example, so they can put in their details, what is wrong,

the reason for their appointment.

P (Political)	E (Economical)	S(Sociological)	T(Technological)
Funds for more hospitals	More specialists	Appointment reminders	Equipment
Encourage younger people			Applications
Hiring more staff			

3. Discussion

I did not find any positive impacts based on the stakeholders, but a lot of negatives. According to research by Vitals Healthcare's consumer interaction group, the fewer patients waiting, the higher the more positive is the experience. There is a strong correlation between the waiting time and the doctor's estimate. In the same study, the waiting time for doctors with five stars (the highest score in the study) was more than 20 minutes shorter than the waiting time for doctors with one star: 12 minutes, 33 seconds, and 33 minutes and 4 seconds. Of course, someone might say that the opposite is true: waiting time is a by-product of poorly organized and less professional doctors. Mitch Rothschild, president of Vitals, agreed, and said: "Doctors who can't see the clock may not be able to effectively manage other parts of the patient's experience. Waiting time has an effect on the patient's assessment of the standard of treatment: 84 percent of patients said that adequate waiting time is necessary or very critical for ensuring high-quality patient care. This is due to the fact that delay is normally considered part of the "availability kit," rather than prior to service. The longer the patient waits, the worse the queue level and the patient's satisfaction. This gives the impression of a poorly controlled and disorganised operation, rather than the competent services that everybody requires when they see a doctor. Poor waiting times in hospitals can also have a negative impact on finances. In short, patients do not want to deal with hospitals that don't respect their time. 30% of patients have to wait a long time to see a doctor, while 20% of patients will switch their healthcare providers completely. If the patient does not show up in the future, the financial impact will persist. To make up for the absence, some clinics and hospitals decided to make two appointments for the patient, which means they gave 2. Give patients the same appointment time. Overbooking (more visits per day) and repeated bookings can reduce the impact of no-show. However, medical experts despise this practice, because it will also cause delays to overwhelmed work. The New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) also pointed out that patients who cannot see a doctor are more likely to

despair and choose a doctor. This leads to overcrowding in the emergency room, which means that the hospital has less money left and cannot be used for the next emergency care. After all, long waiting times will not only lose profits, but also lose opportunities. There are the 20% of patients are willing to pay extra for faster service. „The problem with wait times in healthcare is not that they exist, it's that they're actually easy to resolve. The most you need is a queue management system, after which your queuing process is set.”
(Tšernov, 2018)

4. Analysis

Based on my Decision - Making tool you can clearly see that there are more negative impacts of long waiting times than positive. As a total of (-4) we can make the conclusion that there should not long waiting times. The only positive side I recognised is that while you are waiting you can relax, eat something, or just go to the cafeteria of the hospital. As negatives I have three things. The worst of them is that due to the long time you have to wait for your appointment for example the pains you have could have got much stronger. While sitting in the waiting room for hours eventually you are missing the time you could spend on other things, like cleaning the house, spend time with the family or just do something that makes you happy. Comfortable areas could change everything. The area plays a big role. It could make your experience better or worse. Interesting Impacts of waiting that while we wait, we can meet other people, discuss, and exchange different information or just help each other. While waiting you can also manage to finish something from work or just something else you can manage to do easily. You will also have a distraction which means the time will pass quicker and you will have finished something while waiting. During the time we spend in the waiting area if there are any magazines, newspaper, or books, we could read something. It will educate us on some topics while the time is flying. (Appendix 2)

5. Alternative solutions

As solutions there are few things that we, as patients and the hospital can follow. These will help us to reduce the waiting times. Collect patient information before making an appointment. For example, you can already collect the data, like the medical records and insurance number. Everything can be prepared before, like the forms we always need to fill.

If it would be online and accessible from home, we would not spend time on it in the waiting room. Transfer documents to other trained staff. Your time should be focused on interacting with patients instead of spending a lot of time on paperwork. Collecting medical records, writing prescriptions and inspection forms, and even keeping records during the doctor's visit to the patient. Do not participate in administrative tasks and make sure you spend most of your time providing quality care to patients. Make a non-delayed policy and stick to it. If patients are more than 30 minutes late, you can let them know that they need to change the schedule. Make sure to notify all patients in advance. You should follow the guidelines in all aspects (office, phone, emails, face to face communication). Mobile queuing solutions. Mobile queuing tools are a great way to reduce waiting time and make patients satisfied with your service. When a patient is behind, a variety of applications can be used to notify their employees. They can join a virtual queue to inform them of their "location" and allow them to eat something or relax in a nearby cafe while waiting. Continuous communication with patients allows them to better control their time and helps them manage patient flow. Provide a comfortable and welcoming area. At least the workers can make sure to provide a nice seat for the patient in the waiting room. Even if the waiting time is not ideal, providing free coffee and tea and free internet or different interesting TV programs can greatly improve patient satisfaction. Create surveys to pinpoint bottlenecks. It can be difficult to correctly assess the course of departure from your everyday job at times. Try running a quick survey to monitor and patient's schedule from arrival to departure. How long do you spend in the waiting room or through the exam? How long do you think it would take you to see a doctor? Make sure to use this survey on different days and weeks to clearly understand the problem. This method also shows your patients that you value their time. Use telemedicine solutions. Telemedicine solutions could simplify collecting the information of the patient and avoiding missing appointments. In addition, virtual treatment options make it easy for your patients to see a doctor at home, so they no longer need to go to the office or sit in the waiting room. Telemedicine solutions can be a direct path to the future of care models. (Iafolla, 2017) You can also use the option with that you will be able to call back. You can let them know that you will call back as soon as possible instead of attracting customers indefinitely. However, it is important that you be true to your words and deeds and call customers immediately when you have the opportunity so that they can continue their day without feeling like they are wasting time. Use correct contact techniques. Dealing with consumers is another typical error committed by customer service firms. Well, it can be tough to reach demands at times, but being silent can only make matters worse. Customers will be more at ease if you have this detail, as they will know that the company is facing shortages or that orders cannot be completed on schedule. (James, 2020)

6. Conclusion

As a conclusion of my report there are the three principal priorities of the hospital, urgent care, cancer therapy, and traditional surgery such as knee and hip replacements. The whole of the United Kingdom is attempting to keep up. The measuring system used in the United Kingdom varies by region. This is the most comparable since 95 percent of patients are expected to be seen or hospitalised within four hours in any country. 20,000 Patients had to wait for their procedures before Covid – 19. Now there are over 4.6 Million. Waiting Times are a big issue with in the healthcare, especially now while we are in a pandemic. Through applications, more hospitals, staff, equipment and trained personal we will be able to reduce the time of waiting. It is also up to us as human beings to be calm, show empathy and understand the individual in front us.

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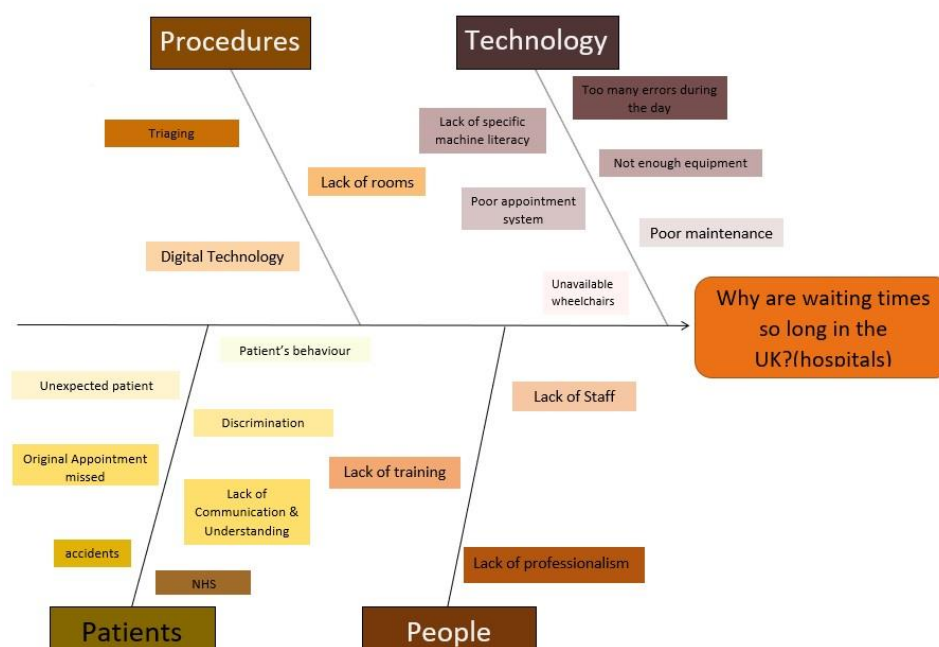
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9. Appendix

Appendix 1



Appendix 2

Plus (+)	Minus (-)	Interesting (?)
Relax/have lunch (+1)	You do not have time for other things (-5)	Manage other things while waiting (+2)
Comfortable area (+2)		
	Pains could aggravate (-7)	Meet people (+3)
	Uncomfortable waiting area (-2)	Read something (+2)
= +3	= -14	= +7

Total: +3-14+7= -4