



Touch Time

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Patient "touch time" is defined as the actual time the provider spends with the patient. The goal in addressing "touch time" is to make the best use of the time the patient has with the physician as well as other members of the practice team and to minimize the amount of "waiting time" for the patient. By adhering to this goal, your practice's actual patient cycle time will be decreased. Here are some tips on making the most effective use of your touch time.

- Begin by scheduling patients appropriately. Develop an understanding of demand (the number of patients in your panel) and supply (the amount of schedule time available for appointments). Utilize a combination of pre-scheduled visits and same day scheduling.
- Listen to your patients and do not interrupt! Studies have shown that patients are interrupted by their provider in 18-23 seconds of their explanation of why they need to be seen. If patients are allowed to continue they will share 90% of what they need to share in 3-4 minutes.
- Empower patients to become more actively involved in their care by encouraging them to have a list of concerns and questions ready when you walk in the room. What symptoms are they experiencing? How long have they been experiencing the symptoms? What have they tried to alleviate the symptoms? What questions do they have? Suggest that they limit their concerns to three or four for the visit. This will allow them to prioritize the concerns they want addressed.
- Apologize if you are late. This acknowledges patients' time is important too.
- If the wait is going to be long, offer the patient an opportunity to reschedule.
- Greet the patient by their first name (or preferred name) and with a smile.
- Get down to their level...eye level, that is! This lets the patient know you are sincerely interested in them.

- Focus on the patient in the room and not on the other things going on in the office. Let the patient know they are the most important person in the room!
- Work to build a partnership with your patients by engaging patients in decision making related to their care. Anxiety may prevent a patient from accurately hearing instructions or understanding the course of treatment planned. Discuss and validate a patient's understanding of treatment plans by having them "teach back" the instructions which have been given to them.
- If additional care is needed, create a guide for follow-up activities that the patient can take with them.

Additional resources:

Find out more about TransforMED's National Demonstration Project (NDP)
<http://www.transformed.com/ndp.cfm>

Learn about the TransforMED Medical Home model
<http://www.transformed.com/transformed.cfm>

Read relevant TransforMED workingpapers:

Tips for Reducing Patient Cycle Time
<http://www.transformed.com/workingPapers/ReducingCycleTime.pdf>

Improving the Patient's Experience
<http://www.transformed.com/workingPapers/ImprovingPatientExperience.pdf>

Huddles: Increased Efficiency in Mere Minutes a Day
<http://www.transformed.com/workingPapers/Huddles.pdf>

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