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## Leveraging leading practices to optimize patient flow

### Helping achieve VA's objective to Enhance the Veteran Experience and Access to Healthcare

We will help to flesh out the details of the integration plan while identifying those existing processes, tools and technologies that can be used to create the eventual goal: a comprehensive flow management system. This system will help deliver a better Veteran experience, improve outcomes and quality of care, enhance efficiency and reduce costs, all while optimizing the supporting IT infrastructure.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is faced with all the same challenges of other health care providers – keeping demand and capacity in balance and providing quality care while holding down costs. But the VHA, one of the largest health care organizations in the world, has an additional, most important task: making sure our veterans' access to care and experience with the system is superior.

That's why the VHA created the Enhance the Veteran Experience and Access to Healthcare (EVEAH) initiative, to raise the access and quality of our veterans' health care. As part of this initiative, the VHA has focused on improving patient flow and transfer practices by building on the work that various Veteran Integrated Service Networks have already done and by standardizing the approach to patient flow through a common tracking tool that will be used across all of these networks.

To make this work, the VHA needs to develop an exhaustive plan for patient flow improvement that integrates the many systems in use currently (e.g., emergency department, bed management, utilization management, surgery) into one overall management system. This system will allow the VHA to track a patient through any phase of the health care process and to improve throughput and outcomes at a lower cost.

### Patient-centered project objectives

The VHA has asked our team to provide a baseline assessment of the current state of transfer and patient flow coordination among Veterans Administration Medical Centers and commercial providers, and to identify successful practices it might be able to implement nationally.

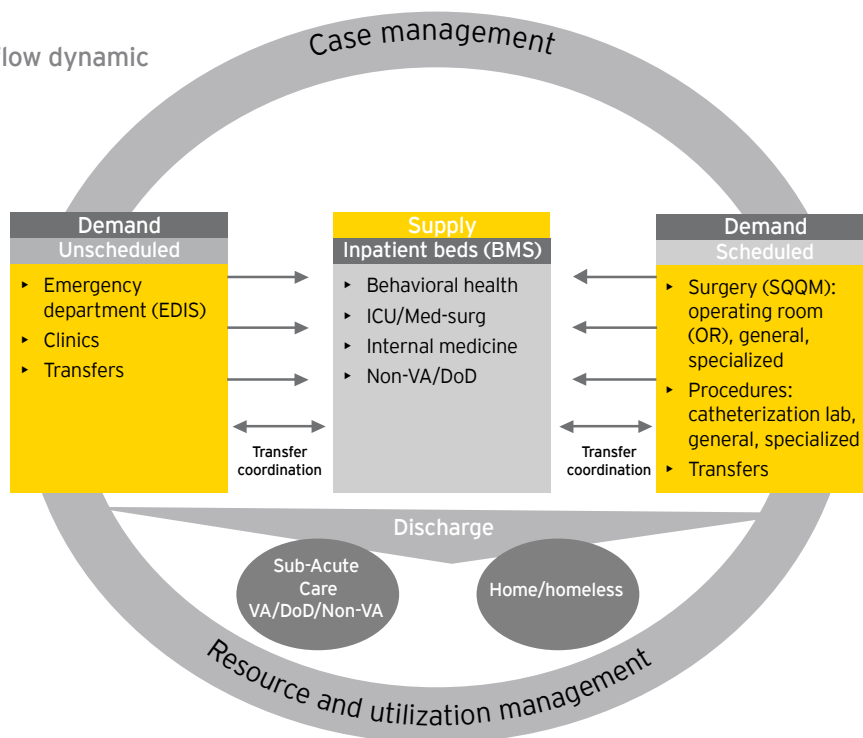
In only the first phase of the project, we've already determined that optimizing resources, assets and processes (e.g., management of case load, mix, scheduled demand vs. unscheduled demand trends) and using process modeling will dramatically improve overall patient flow.

## Evidencebased assessment: our approach

We've developed an approach, detailed below, based on our long-standing knowledge of the Veterans Administration health care system and our deep understanding of patient flow process transformation:

- ▶ **Conduct a baseline assessment of leading practices.** Using six assessment areas – costs, resources, process flow, technology, quality/satisfaction/outcomes and governance, we will identify leading practices and their associated drivers in VHA and commercial entities.
- ▶ **Execute a comprehensive assessment.** We will hold a state-of-the-art (SOTA) conference with commercial and Veterans Administration patient flow experts and other stakeholders, then use the feedback to inform further analysis. And we will use existing data and metrics to help quantify the potential out-of-network cost reduction by the use of flow improvement.
- ▶ **Develop a final written report summarizing recommendations for the desired future state based upon our assessments and the SOTA conference.**

Figure 1.  
Patient flow dynamic



Demand: scheduled and unscheduled points of entry into the VHA health care system from various sources  
Supply: specific amount of beds, appointments and support resources and personnel available

## Examining the flow: our progress so far

Thus far, we have:

- ▶ Worked with the Veterans Health Administration to finalize and approve a patient flow maturity model, assessment questions and their supporting tools
- ▶ Created a time-phased schedule to conduct interviews in each identified facility and summarize results
- ▶ Assigned a clinical process consultant to each assessment category to help maintain consistency in analysis
- ▶ Begun the interview process, and are continuously reviewing interview responses and facility-provided documentation as we develop the baseline assessment report

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