Deep Dive – Timeliness

Timeliness

Timeliness of care includes two elements. First, patients should be able to physically access care with acceptable and reasonable waiting times. Second, hours and days of facility operation should be such that patients can find a time to visit facilities without sacrificing other obligations and duties such as work or childcare and can access care for emergent needs, including on nights and weekends.

Visual Aid - Timeliness

Patients must be able to access primary care services with acceptable and reasonable waiting times, and at days and times that are convenient to them.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS
Common issues include:

- Inconvenient operational hours
- Inefficient or non-existent appointment systems
- Long waiting times/short consultation times once patients are at the facility

Medical facilities
Timeliness is a component of Access

System

- Governance & Leadership
  - Primary Health Care Policies
  - Quality Management Infrastructure
  - Social Accountability

- Health Financing
  - Payment Systems
  - Spending on Primary Health Care
  - Financial Coverage

- Adjustment to Population Health Needs
  - Surveillance
  - Priority Setting
  - Innovation & Learning

Inputs

- Drugs & Supplies
- Facility Infrastructure
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- Workforce
- Funds

Population Health Management
- Local Priority Setting
- Community Engagement
- Empowerment
- Proactive Population Outreach

Facility Organization & Management
- Team-based Care Organization
- Facility Management Capability & Leadership
- Information Systems Use
- Performance Measurement & Management Outreach

Service Delivery

Access
- Financial
- Geographic
- Timeliness

High Quality Primary Health Care
- First Contact Accessibility
- Continuity
- Comprehensiveness
- Coordination
- Person-centered

Availability of Effective PHC Services
- Provider Availability
- Provider Competence
- Provider Motivation
- Patient Provider Respect & Trust
- Safety

Outputs

- Effective Service Coverage
  - Health Promotion
  - Disease Prevention
  - RMNCH
  - Childhood Illness
  - Infectious Disease
  - NCDs & Mental Health
  - Palliative Care

- Health Status
- Responsiveness to People
- Equity
- Efficiency
- Resilience of Health Systems

Social Determinants & Context (Political, Social, Demographic & Socioeconomic)
Financial Access is a component of Access

Access
Financial Access
Geographic Access
Timeliness

Financial Access

Geographic Access

Timeliness
What can you learn about Timeliness from the Improvement Strategies?

**SECTION 1**

What is Timeliness?

**What it is:** Learn more about the core principles and goals of Timeliness and its role in PHC improvement.

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**SECTION 2**

How do I assess my performance?

**What it is:** Learn more about some indications that improvements might be relevant in your context and what you can achieve by focusing improvements on Timeliness.

**Vital Signs Profile:** Use the information in your Vital Signs Profile to help determine relevant areas for improvement.

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**SECTION 3**

How do I get started?

**What others have done:** Learn from implementation approaches and challenges in other country contexts.

**How to succeed:** Consider your country context, what elements are not functioning properly, and what needs to be in place to support effective improvements.

**What to ask:** Use guiding questions to help determine how you might begin to plan and enact reforms in your country context.

*Guided by the above considerations and relevant resources, start to build out an improvement plan with your CE lead and/or focal point*
What can my country achieve by focusing on Timeliness?

Goals & Outcomes

- **Equity and improved health outcomes:** Timely access to health care is critical to improving equity and ultimately, improved health outcomes for all segments of the population.

- **Financial protection for patients:** Facility hours and operations that align with patient needs and preferences help to mitigate additional costs for patients, such as those due to missed work hours or the need to find alternative childcare.

- **Efficiency and cost-effectiveness:** Timely access to frontline services helps to ensure patients can use the PHC system as the first point of contact when they need it, helping to reduce utilization of emergency- or hospital-based services that may result in higher costs for the patient and health system.
Timeliness – How do I assess my performance?

Learn more about whether you should focus on Timeliness in the Vital Signs Profile.
How do I assess my performance?

Use the information in the Vital Signs Profile to help determine relevant areas of improvement.

Completion of a Vital Signs Profile gives countries a holistic understanding of PHC strengths and weaknesses, a critical first step in the measurement for improvement pathway.
What are other indications that Timeliness might be an appropriate area of focus?

Other Indications

☐ Facilities typically operate at hours that are inconvenient to patients who work or have regular obligations.

☐ Facilities use inefficient appointment systems or lack appointment systems altogether.

☐ There are long wait times and/or short appointment times once patients are at the facility.
Timeliness - What is it?

Learn more about the core principles of Timeliness and what you can achieve by focusing improvements in the What it is section.
What is Timeliness?

Timeliness of care is the availability of services with “opening hours, appointment systems and other aspects of service organization and delivery that allow people to obtain [primary health care] services when they need them.”

Timeliness is a key component of access to primary health care

What is Timeliness?

Timeliness of care is the availability of services with “opening hours, appointment systems and other aspects of service organization and delivery that allow people to obtain [primary health care] services when they need them.”

Timeliness is a key component of access to primary health care.

What should I know before beginning improvements?

Who is not accessing services due to timeliness barriers
Most often, individuals who have obligations (employment, household work, school) during typical facility operating hours are most likely to face barriers to access due to timeliness.

What factors are causing barriers for these populations
Beyond inconvenient facility operating hours, these populations may not be able to access timely care due to inefficient or inaccessible appointment systems and/or long waiting times once they reach the facility.
Timeliness of care is the availability of services with “opening hours, appointment systems and other aspects of service organization and delivery that allow people to obtain [primary health care] services when they need them.”

Timeliness is a key component of access to primary health care

What is Timeliness?

What are some key steps to improving Timeliness?

**Extend or rearrange facility hours of operation**
Expanded days and hours of operation may make care available for individuals who work or have regular obligations and reduce wait times.

**Implement or improve appointment systems**
Available and user-friendly appointment systems that are tailored to the internet connectivity and literacy of a given context can better enable patients to schedule care and providers to manage their workload.

**Make visits more efficient and reduce waiting times**
Implement systems to reduce no-shows and maximize use of providers' available time, such as via triaging or telehealth visits.
Deeper dive: Ways to improve timely access to care

Specific interventions that may help to facilities and managers to accommodate these changes and any additional resources required include:

To expand operational hours, facility managers may introduce service delivery changes such as:

- Staggered shifts
- Integrated services
- Increasing staff and/or expanding service delivery hours
- On-call telephone systems

To improve appointment systems, facility managers may implement:

- In-person or community-based appointment systems
- Appointment made via SMS or telephone
- Electronic portals

To reduce waiting times and maximize provider times, managers may introduce:

- Group visits
- Effective delegation to different providers
- Options for telemedicine appointments
Visual aid: Timeliness

**Timeliness**

Patients must be able to access primary care services with acceptable and reasonable waiting times, and at days and times that are convenient to them.

**BARRIERS TO ACCESS**

Common issues include:

- Inconvenient operational hours
- Inefficient or non-existent appointment systems
- Long waiting times/short consultation times once patients are at the facility

**IMPROVED ACCESS STRATEGIES**

Facilities can improve timeliness by using some of the following strategies:

- Appointment systems
- Remote consultations
- Integrated, comprehensive services in the same visit
- Staggered shifts to extend facility operating hours
- Group visits for general health education
Timeliness

How do I get started?

Derive information from **What others have done**, **What to ask** and **How to succeed** to help determine where and how you might begin to plan and enact forms in your country context.
Planning for improvement in your context

The **guidance and recommendations** described within the Timeliness module **are not intended to provide a one-size-fits all solution.**

The **considerations** involved in planning and implementing strategies will depend on your local context.

**Sample activities**

- **Consider** implementation challenges and approaches in other country contexts
- **Understand how the features of your health system**, such as how decisions get made and the role of the private sector, will impact your improvement plans
- **Identify** key elements that need to be in place to support improvements
- **Use the guiding questions in the Improvement Strategies** to spur thinking about Timeliness in your country context and stimulate ideas for improvement
- **Start to develop** an improvement plan
Questions to ask to help you get started

The **specific considerations** involved in planning and implementing strategies will depend on your local context.

The questions listed may be a useful **starting place to determine how you might begin to plan and enact reforms** in your context.

**Sample questions**

- How do patients perceive waiting times both to the next available appointment and once they arrive at a facility, and are these prohibitive to seeking care when needed?
The specific considerations involved in planning and implementing strategies will depend on your local context.

The questions listed may be a useful starting place to determine how you might begin to plan and enact reforms in your context.

Sample questions

☐ How do patients perceive waiting times both to the next available appointment and once they arrive at a facility, and are these prohibitive to seeking care when needed?

☐ If availability on specific days or times of day is an area of weakness, is there flexibility in existing facility operations and workforce to extend hours or days of operation?
The specific considerations involved in planning and implementing strategies will depend on your local context.

The questions listed may be a useful starting place to determine how you might begin to plan and enact reforms in your context.

Sample questions

- How do patients perceive waiting times both to the next available appointment and once they arrive at a facility, and are these prohibitive to seeking care when needed?

- If availability on specific days or times of day is an area of weakness, is there flexibility in existing facility operations and workforce to extend hours or days of operation?

- Is there an existing system for scheduling appointments and are there scheduling options available to all individuals within the catchment area regardless of their access to technology or physical proximity to the facility?
Learn from what others have done

Saturday Primary Health Care Clinic | South Korea
Overtime pay encouraged general practitioners to practice on Saturdays, decreasing patient volume on other days.

Shared Medical Appointments | Ghana & United States
The American College of Nurse-Midwives developed a group curriculum for antenatal care in Ghana.
South Korea: At-a-glance context

- East Asia & Pacific
- High Income
- Single payer National Health Insurance Service
South Korea: At-a-glance context

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Learn from what others have done: South Korea

Why reforms were needed

- In South Korea, the establishment of the National Health Insurance Service in conjunction with rapid economic development has increased access to services and improved health outcomes over the last few decades.

- There is evidence of high rates of overutilization of hospital services attributable to the absence of weekend access to PHC.

Approach

In 2013, South Korea instituted a program that pays General Practitioners (GPs) 30% beyond their normal compensation to provide care on Saturdays.

This incentive encouraged GPs to work on Saturdays and reduced the volume of patients on other days of the week.
Learn from what others have done: South Korea

- General Practitioners (GPs) paid 30% beyond their normal compensation to provide care on Saturdays
  - This incentive encouraged GPs to work on Saturdays
- Saturday visits improved patient access and reduced patient volume on other days of the week
- Increased access on Saturdays also likely decreased utilization of emergency rooms for conditions treatable in primary care settings

Ghana and United States: At-a-glance context

Sub-Saharan Africa

Low-Middle Income

Community Health Planning and Strategy program, piloted in 1994, has increased access to community-based primary health care services
## Ghana and United States: At-a-glance context

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Learn from what others have done: Ghana and United States

Background & rationale

- **Shared medical appointments are not only more efficient** from a facility flow perspective, but can also **help patients develop supportive communities**.

- Compared to individual visits, [patients] are able to spend **more time with providers, form relationships with providers and other mothers, and reinforce knowledge** with one another.
Approach

Group antenatal care (ANC) curriculum:

- Seven lesson modules designed by the American College of Nurse-Midwives
- 60-minute sessions involving story-telling, peer support, and demonstration with a focus on delivering information to women with limited literacy
Learn from what others have done: Ghana and United States

- Women who received group ANC care were more likely to discuss delivery arrangements and transportation with midwives, have saved money for birth, report positive exclusive breastfeeding practices, and discuss newborn problems with midwives.

- Group visits for ANC could contribute to facility efficiency while better equipping women with maternal knowledge.

Outcomes & Impact

Learn from what others have done: Ghana and United States

- **Shared medical appointment curricula**: Providers and government health officials should develop and tailor curricula and modules for different medical visits (e.g. antenatal care, NCD management).

- **Available and competent workforce**: Facility leaders and implementers should train providers to facilitate group visits.

- **Community awareness**: Facility leaders, implementers, and providers should ensure the patients and communities they serve understand and support the shared medical appointment model.
Learn from what others have done: Ghana and United States

- **Shared medical appointments have been used extensively for NCD management in high income countries** to limit repetition of educational medical appointments and build cohorts of patients with similar needs and concerns.

- A study of shared medical appointments for diabetes in the United States found that the success of these programs depended on patients’ motivation and willingness to learn.

Recap: Timeliness

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  - Palliative Care

Outcomes
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- Responsiveness to People
- Equity
- Efficiency
- Resilience of Health Systems

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