

“Prior to this system my patients had to wait three weeks to see me. Now it’s virtually same day so I deal with health issues as they arise.” – Dr. Steven MacDougall, Island Family Health Care, Sydney, NS”¹

Same Day/Advanced Access is an evidenced based strategy that seeks to predict the daily patient demand for care and respond to it rather than attempt to control it. It is based on the principle that when supply and demand for appointments are equal there is no need for waits in the system. It can help alleviate challenges like:

- A busy waiting room.
- Long patient wait times for and during appointments.
- Hectic work days.
- Increased patient complaints about wait times for appointments.
- Staff dissatisfaction with their work environment.
- Demands of an aging population needing more chronic disease management.
- Patients making more use of walk-in clinics and emergency rooms.

This approach is designed to eliminate appointment wait times. NSHA Primary Health Care will work with providers to develop a strategy to reduce their backlog (patients currently waiting for care) and balance their preferred supply of appointments with the expected demand, based on historical visit patterns.

Advanced Access can also reduce the need for complex scheduling systems, elaborate triage systems to decide who can get a same day appointment, and the transfer of demand to other areas of the health care system such as walk-ins or the emergency department.

Steps include:

1. Calculate your supply, demand, and delay.
2. Calculate your good and bad backlog.
3. Work-down the bad backlog over a timeframe you are comfortable with. One strategy is optimizing the care team.
4. Reduce scheduling complexity.
5. Develop contingency plans.
6. Measure cycle time.
7. Reduce cycle time by optimizing rooms and equipment, identifying and managing constraints, and synchronizing patient, provider, and information, and predicting and anticipating patient needs at time of appointment.

Benefits to patients:

- Getting care when they need it (true same day access).
- Improved relationships with providers and staff.
- Fewer and shorter hospital stays.
- Better continuity of care.
- Increased quality of life.

Benefits to providers:

- More time to manage complex chronic illness.
- Reduced stress for providers, admin staff, and patients.
- Better use of time and resources (e.g. admin no longer spending time “negotiating” with patients; fewer no shows)
- Increased quality of both work and personal life.
- Increased practice revenue – regaining patients who go to walk in clinics, which can lead to increased income.
- Go home on time!

“Implementing Advanced Access has been the one thing that has most significantly improved my practice and the quality of my life.” - Dr. Vineet Nair, Core Family Health Team, London, ON

¹ <https://www.yourdoctors.ca/doctors/bio/steven-macdougall>