

Improving Outpatient to Inpatient Handoffs for Direct Admissions to Internal Medicine Services

Seth Scheetz, MD, Misha Tran, MD, Catherine Waymel, MD, Jack Zhao, MD, Mikail Siddiki, MD, Micah Prochaska, MD,
Vineet Arora, MD, Khanh Nguyen, MD

Problem

- A direct hospital admission is a common process wherein a patient is non-emergently admitted by an ambulatory provider to the hospital ward, bypassing an evaluation in the emergency room.
- Direct admissions can improve patient satisfaction, improve coordination of care between outpatient and inpatient teams, and reduce emergency room volume and costs.
- A non-optimized process can lead to safety hazards, such as delays in identifying unstable patients and create inefficiencies in care, including increasing the number of clinicians involved in a patient's care and redundant diagnostic studies.

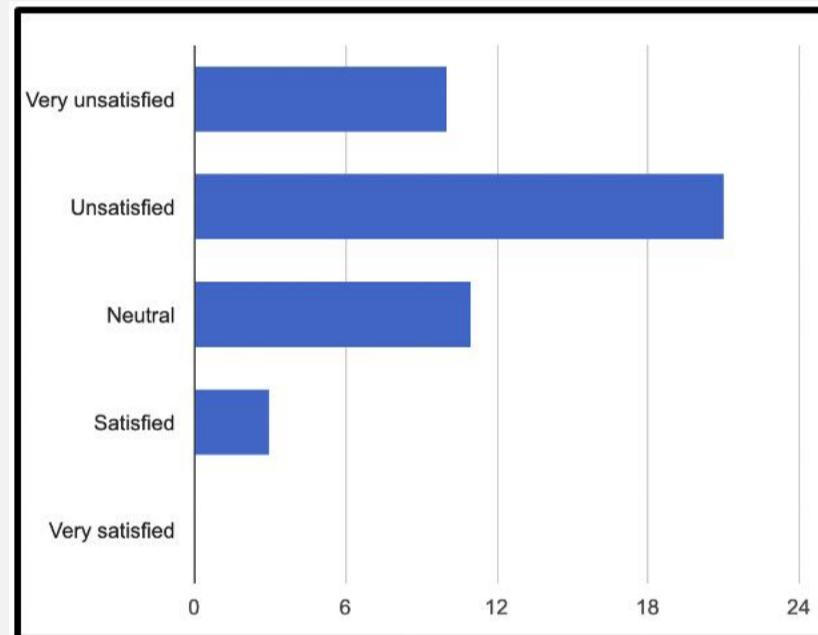


Figure 1

Goal

- To create a process to facilitate routine, high-quality handoffs between outpatient and inpatient teams for direct admissions to medicine services.
- Improved communication may help with high value care aims including reducing healthcare waste, avoiding harm, and improving outcomes.

Strategy

- A process map was developed to better understand the current state of direct admissions and to identify the best form of intervention.
- A convenience survey was distributed to internal medicine residents and hospitalists at University of Chicago Medicine to measure the perception of the current state of direct admissions and the quality of handoff information. There were 45 participants in the survey.
- A direct admission SmartSet with a handoff note was developed to improve communication of key information.
- PDSA cycles have been utilized to improve the design of the interventions.

Results

Direct Admission Handoff Note

February 5, 2021
Patient: [redacted]

ADMIT TO
(Medicine Services:200846)

Patient's current location: [location:200842]

REASON FOR ADMISSION/BRIEF HISTORY

Is the patient stable for a general med-surg floor?
[clinical stability:200841]

Recommendations on arrival:

The appropriate inpatient admitting team has been notified by (pager listed in the service selection above): ***

Who should be contacted if there are further questions upon admission? ***

Figure 2: Direct Admission Handoff Note – We developed a note template to prompt admitting teams to document key information. The note template automatically shows up within notes for the inpatient encounter.

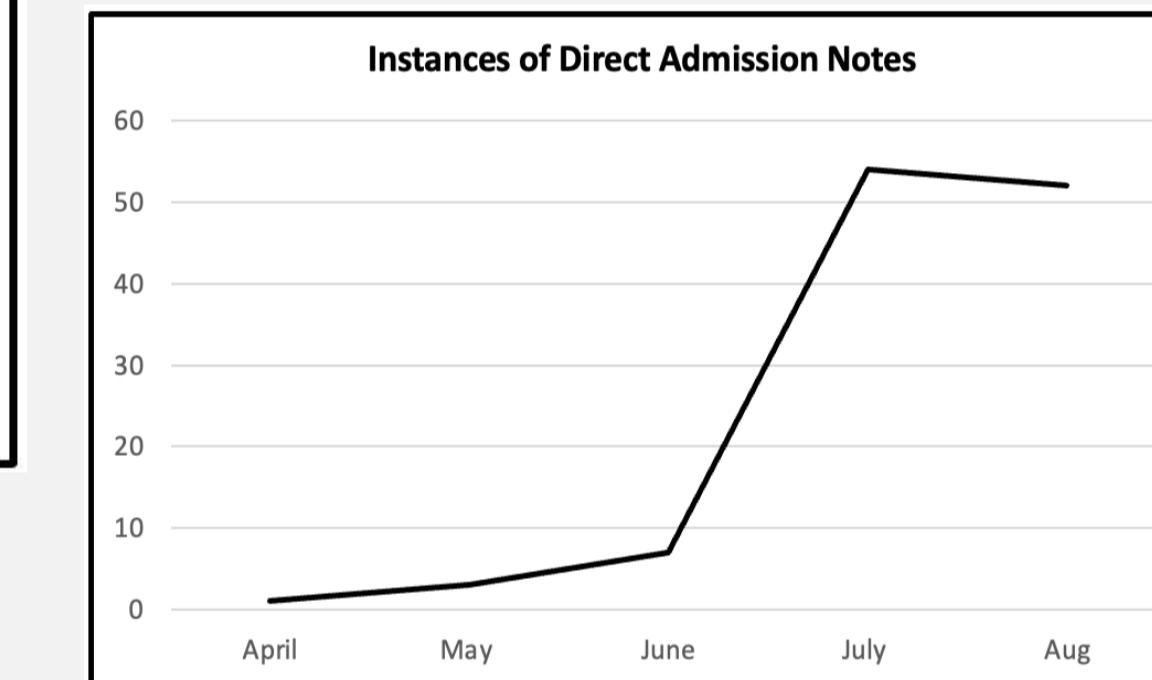
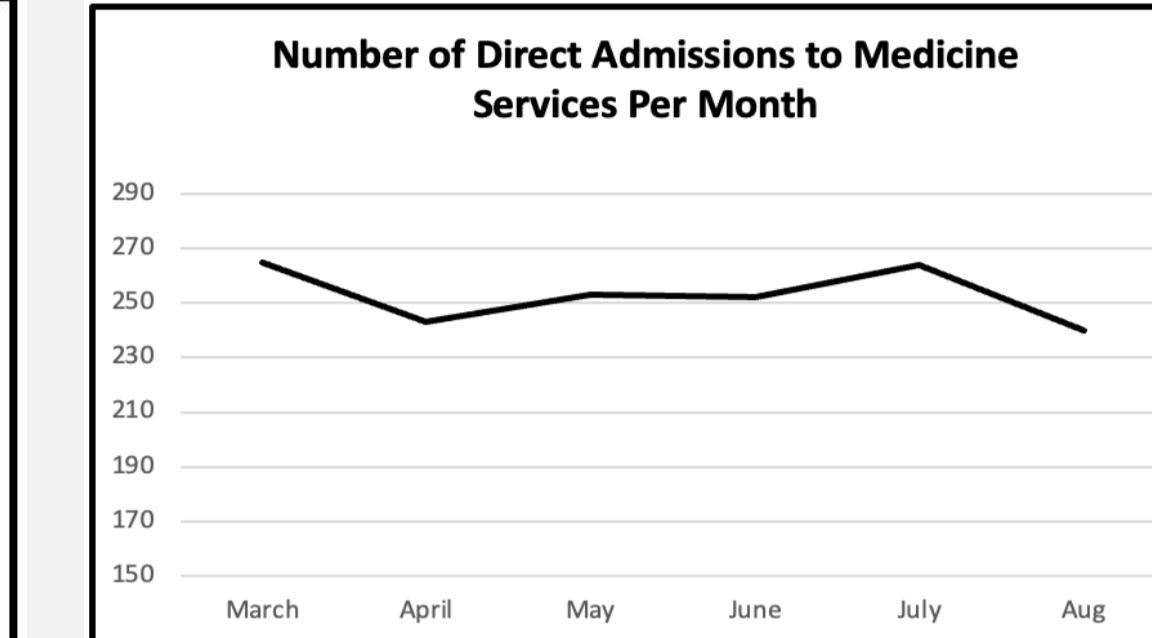


Chart 1 & 2: Instances of direct admissions to internal medicine services & direct admission notes in 2022

Direct Admission

Use for admitting patients from clinic and home. Patients requiring emergent care, procedures, or testing should be sent to the Emergency Room.

Instructions:

- Fill out the bed request order
- Complete the handoff note (click **add now**)
- Call Bed Access x42337 to check the status of available beds and confirm order
- Page the appropriate inpatient team (listed under **Admit To** in the handoff note)

Bed Request

Bed Request Order

Bed Request

Admitting Provider: Primary Service Attending Physician: [redacted]

Direct Admission Note

Hover over AMB DIRECT ADMISSION NOTE and click **add now**. It will open as a new note or added to the end of an open note. This SmartText can be also used outside of the Direct Admission SmartSet.

DA Handoff Note

AMB DIRECT ADMISSION NOTE

Figure 3. Direct Admission SmartSet – We worked with the EPIC programming team to build a SmartSet to standardize the direct admission process. The SmartSet includes the bed request order as well as the direct admission handoff note.

- We track the total number of direct admissions to medicine services for the past 6 month, stratified by admitting department to help with targeted outreach.
- While the total number of direct admissions remains stable, there has been quick, significant uptake of the direct admission note during the initial months of the rollout.

Conclusions

- The survey results highlighted a general dissatisfaction with the state of direct admissions to internal medicine services, as well as a lack of communication about directly admitted patients.
- We designed a process that has been increasingly used for direct admissions.
- Increasing use of the direct admission note template is a direct indicator of improved communication around direct admissions.
- Future steps will include further integration of the SmartSet and note into the direct admission process, continued feedback and dissemination with PDSA cycles, establishing auto-pages, and a post-intervention survey.

Acknowledgements

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