

Navigating the Surge: Enhancing Patient Satisfaction and Efficiency in the Emergency Department Amidst Rising Volumes

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Introduction

In the face of prolonged waits and overcrowding, hospitals nationwide grapple with the perennial challenge of achieving satisfactory patient experiences in their emergency departments (EDs).

These factors invariably impact the overall efficiency of patient throughput. Faced with this reality, a 45-bed ED was tasked with the formidable objective of elevating satisfaction scores by nearly 20% while simultaneously reducing the duration from patient arrival to discharge.

Objectives

At the onset of 2023, the ED set out with a target patient satisfaction score of 59.7%, starting the year at 41.7%. Concurrently, the median arrival to discharge time stood at 280 minutes, with an objective of reducing it to 210 minutes. The ED grappled with an average daily volume of 112 patients at the year's commencement. To achieve these ambitious goals, three key objectives were identified:

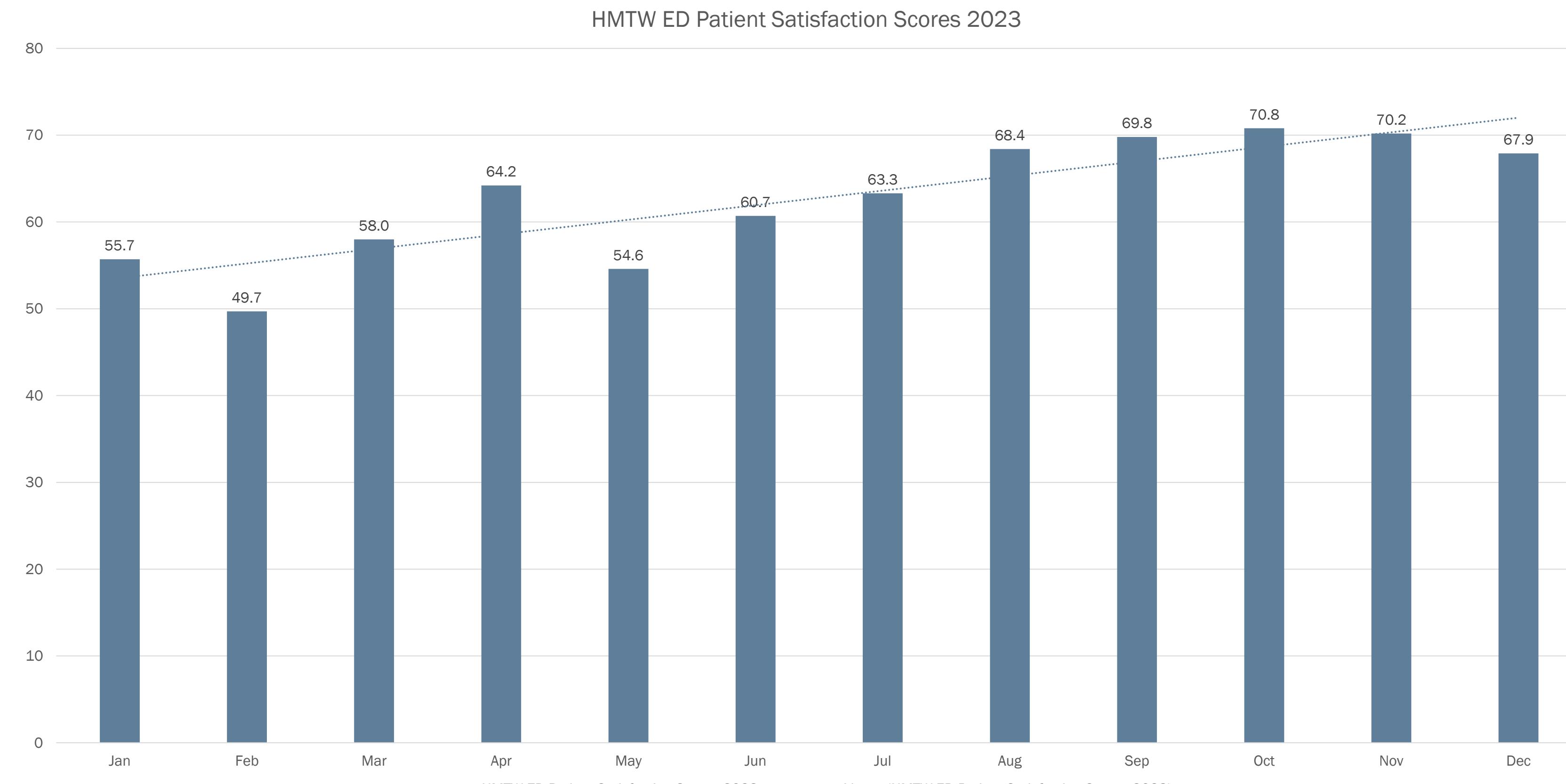
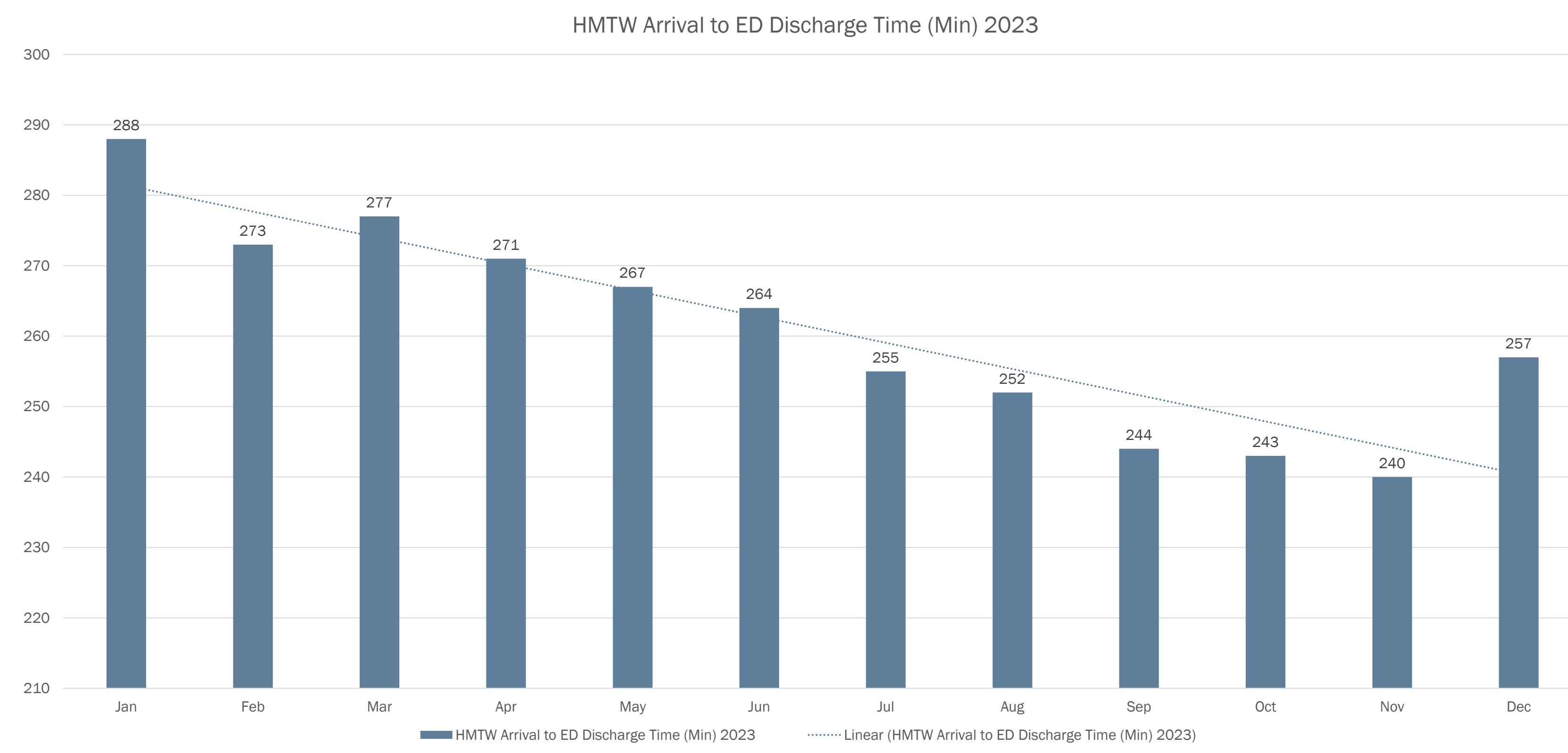
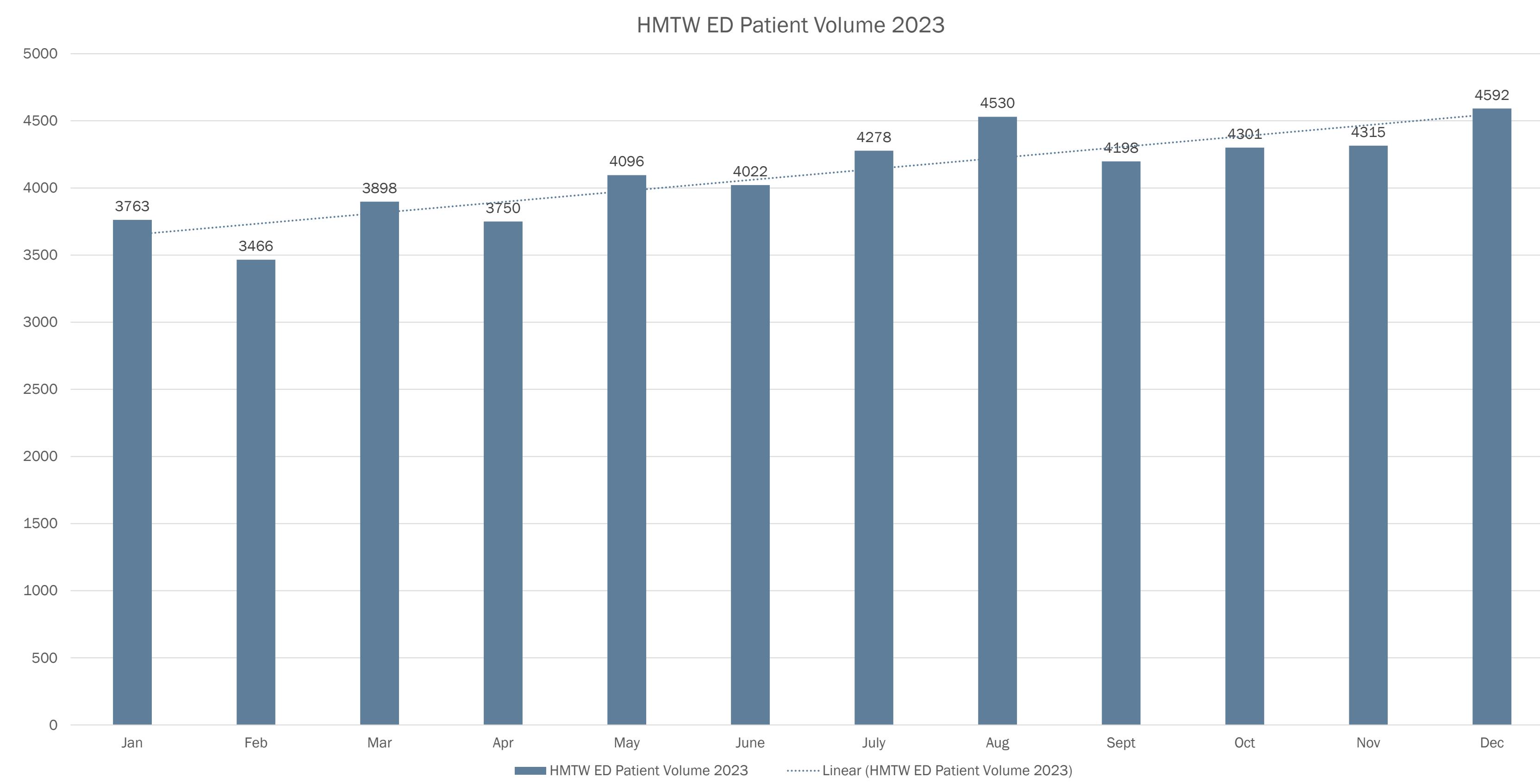
1. Recognize the factors that contribute to prolonged duration from patient arrival to discharge within the ED.
2. Develop tactics to enhance patient satisfaction.
3. Elucidate the impact of throughput on the efficiency of an ED.

Methods

In January 2023, the ED Director created the ED Throughput Committee comprised of an interdisciplinary team focused on patient satisfaction and ED efficiency. The team met monthly to review data, discuss best practices, and develop processes for improvement. Key tactics throughout 2023 included:

- Key Leadership Roles – Charge Nurse Assignments
- Strategic Operational Improvements – Flex Zone
- Additional dedicated patient liaisons during peak hours
- Targeted focus on employee retention and staffing
- Staff engagement with throughput competitions
- Collaborative ventures with imaging to expedite studies

Result



Results

After concerted efforts and process enhancements, the department not only surpassed the targeted patient satisfaction score but also saw notable improvements in throughput times, despite a surge in daily patient volume. By the year's end, patient satisfaction had risen to 65.2%, and the median arrival to discharge time had reduced to 261 minutes, despite an increased average daily volume of 134 patients.

According to Mostafa and El-Atawi (2024), prolonged ED stays can lead to adverse outcomes, emphasizing the urgency of efficiency. The improvements implemented in this ED not only promoted better outcomes and quality of care but also enhanced efficiency, reflecting a commitment to patient-centric care and operational excellence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the successful enhancement of patient satisfaction and efficiency in the Emergency Department amid increased patient volumes underscores the effectiveness of targeted, multifaceted strategies. The ED's significant highlight the impact of focused interventions and process improvements. These advancements demonstrate that with the right approaches, it is possible to manage increased patient demand effectively while maintaining high standards of care. This offers valuable insights into the dynamics of ED operations but also provides a practical framework for other departments aiming to achieve similar improvements in patient satisfaction and operational efficiency.

Acknowledgments

- ED Throughput Committee Members for 2023
- ED Staff Members
- ED Physicians and Advance Practice Providers (APPs)

References

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