

## **A SALUTE TO... NAVAL HOSPITAL JACKSONVILLE'S CALL CENTER DIVISION**

Commanding Officer Capt. Raquel Bono and Naval Hospital Jacksonville's leadership are committed to providing patient-centered quality health care. This is one of the hospital's top priorities and delivering timely care is at the heart of this endeavor. The Call Center Division, made up of the Nurse Call Center and Central Appointments (CA), is using best business practices to improve services, patient safety and satisfaction.

A year ago, CA was using a "full-triage" approach for scheduling primary care appointments. Patients competed for appointments based on the type of care necessitated by their symptoms. This carve out method created a backlog due to limited types of appointments available. The CA team, acting on recommendations from the Access to Care (ATC) Committee, implemented a patient-centered "open access" approach. Now when patients call, they are asked when they would like to be seen and are scheduled according to their needs. The Primary Care clinics changed the majority of appointments to Open Access (OPAC) types, which are used for a variety of needs like acute, routine or follow-up appointment—whatever the patient needs. This approach allows for easy access by enabling the CA clerk to use any open slot the patient desires for medical care needed.

By closely monitoring the average wait time before a call is answered, the average time to speak with a clerk has decreased from 90 to 30 seconds in one year. With the average call monthly of 32,000 calls, this improvement has decreased the dropped call rate from 7 % to 5 %. The CA hours of operation far exceed any appointment service available in the civilian sector. Services are available 14 hours/day, Mon - Fri and 8 hours on weekends/holidays. This busy office schedules appointments not only for the hospital's 3 primary care clinics and 20 specialty clinics, but also for 3 Naval Branch Health Clinics. Since its establishment in 1996, CA has been benchmarked by other military treatment facilities and its guidelines and criteria replicated across the region.

The staff is now looking into demand management which empowers patients to make better health care decisions with the help of their medical team. The goal is to provide appropriate care, encourage wellness, and teach patients when to seek medical attention. Healthier patients require fewer appointments. Demand management tools like the Nurse Call Center (NCC) also improves access. Nurses are available to discuss health-related concerns, provide expert advice or direct patients who are seeking urgent medical care. The nurses now place all triage encounters directly into the patient's electronic medical record for review in "real time" by their Primary Care Provider (PCM). This process maintains continuity of care for the patient and allows the PCM to review the encounters at anytime.

Other initiatives the Call Center Division has adopted include publishing provider schedules six-weeks in advance, minimizing clinic book-only appointments, and promoting TRICARE Online. Additionally, provider schedules may not be canceled without Department Head approval and departmental training has been standardized within the facility. While there is always room to improve, Naval Hospital Jacksonville takes great pride in its accomplishments. The hospital is besting other Naval Family Medicine teaching facilities in access to care with an overall rating of 92 percent. The Call Center Division has been pivotal in leading the way to improving patient access and overall satisfaction.