



## KHA Script for Managing ED Wait Times

Managing Emergency Department wait times can be hard! For those times when the waits are longer than you would like them to be, one of the most critical things you can do is manage the expectations of your patients and support their comfort while they are in your waiting room. Below, please find a strategically crafted script that delivers a message of compassion and gratitude for the patience of your waiting room guests while keeping the channels of communication open with them to ensure their needs are met.

*“Hi, (patient name), my name is (first name). I am one of the (nurses/techs/etc.). Thank you for your patience. We’ve been quite busy today, and part of your wait is because we need to give each patient our full attention while they are in our treatment rooms. Once we bring you back, you’ll receive the same excellent care! There are (current number in treatment) patients ahead of you, unless someone with a more urgent need arrives that we would be required to treat first. We are working hard to see you promptly. I will come back to update you in (x minutes). If you have any questions or needs before then, please ask the receptionist to see me.\*\*\*”*

*\*\*If the patient seems very frustrated, add: “I apologize; we know it is difficult to wait, and that you are (feeling ill/in pain/etc.). May I bring you (comfort offering) to help you be more comfortable?”*

The elements of that example which are noteworthy are as follows:

- Lead with a personal introduction to give the patient a sense of connection and add warmth to the interaction.
- Ensure that your count estimate includes a disclaimer indicating “...there are (current number in treatment) patients ahead of you, **unless someone with a more urgent need arrives that we would be required to treat first.**” This helps proactively ward off frustration if someone walks in after them but gets triaged

and called back first. Plus, the phrase “required to” suggests that such a circumstance is beyond the hospital’s control.

- Thank the patient for their patience rather than repeatedly apologizing. This gives the patient a greater sense of control and also keeps morale higher for the staff who do not have to keep apologizing all day long for things beyond their ability to change.
- At the conclusion, ensure the person issuing the apology makes themselves available to the patient who is waiting in case they have further needs.
- When offering a comfort aid to a frustrated patient, your hospital may need an algorithm to guide staff in regards to what can be made available based on their presenting complaint (e.g., if they are there for stomach pain, no food or drink can be offered, but a warm blanket can; if fever, no warm blanket, but perhaps a cool pack or some ice chips, etc.).

KHA would be very happy to support the creation of such an algorithm if desired—just let us know!

For more information, contact:

**Casey Franklin**

Associate Vice President,

Quality and Health Professions

[cfranklin@kyha.com](mailto:cfranklin@kyha.com) or 270-579-2974

