

# CASE STUDY



uOttawa

## University of Ottawa Health Services FHT

### Transforming patient intake: How waiting room tablets saved time and reduced intake costs by over 40%

The UOHS Family Health Team is one of the largest and busiest FHTs in the province, handling over 225,000 patient visits at 6 clinics in 2013 alone. They are also dedicated to being among the most forward thinking and innovative.

As part of their commitment to providing the best patient care and enhancing their core primary services and health promotion programs, UOHS FHT is always looking for ways to implement innovative technology solutions. After learning about Ocean, the team saw a way to replace their paper-based patient check-in and intake process with tablets in the waiting room – a change that had the potential to significantly improve administrative costs and processes.

#### Evaluating Ocean: Understanding Costs & Benefits

The UOHS plan to use tablets for intake was exciting; however, justifying the investment required a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis to measure current intake costs against the cost of using tablets.

“For the first time, we did a detailed assessment of the costs associated with our current processes. That included printed labels, paper for intake forms and clinic policy documents, labour and storage costs associated with scanning forms and maintaining them on our servers, and the cost of shredding paper forms,” said Pascal Hodgson, Clinical Data Coordinator at UOHS FHT. “With 600 patients coming through our clinics each day, those hard costs added up quickly.”

The analysis projected substantial savings. In fact, the team estimated they could save over 40% on intake costs by using tablets; and that didn’t factor in other soft costs, efficiencies and savings.

“We saw three compelling reasons that pushed us to move our intake process over to Ocean – cost savings, time savings, and the ability to apply simpler, more consistent processes through automation,” said Pascal Hodgson, Clinical Data Coordinator at UOHS FHT. “We also saw the potential for Ocean to help us automate other processes beyond patient intake in the future.”

#### Getting Started with Tablets

When the tablets were first implemented, there was some apprehension among reception staff about changing their day-to-day intake process while adding a layer of technology. Despite this, within a matter of days, their feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

By eliminating time-consuming manual processes like updating phone numbers in patient records and scanning paperwork, office staff found they could spend more time dealing with important patient issues like scheduling follow up appointments and referrals.



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**Pascal Hodgson,**  
Clinical Data Coordinator  
at UOHS FHT



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## Challenges

With over 600 patients flowing through their clinics each day, UOHS FHT was looking for a better way to deal with patient check-in and intake. Their existing workflow involved time-consuming, manual processes, administrative inefficiencies, and substantial hard costs.

## Solution: Ocean Tablets

Today, every patient is offered an Ocean Tablet at check-in. Patients can complete all intake forms for demographics, clinic policies & fees forms on the tablet, and updates are automatically reflected in the patient record in the EMR.

## Ocean at UOHS Today: A Tablet for Every Patient

Today, UOHS has 28 tablets across seven clinics. Virtually every patient is given a tablet when they check in to review and update their demographic information and agree to clinic policies.

The system is set up with rules to automatically display the appropriate forms to each patient based on the type of patient (student vs. non-student), and previous forms completed. This ensures that patients are not being asked to complete forms such as email consent or missed appointment policies more than once.

The rule-based system also eliminates the need for reception staff to make decisions about which forms a patient should complete – improving consistency while reducing pressure on staff. As an added bonus, while a patient is completing their check-in forms in the waiting room, reception staff is free to deal with other patient concerns.

## Moving Forward: Web-based Intake, Clinical Use & More

UOHS FHT continues to find new ways to use the Ocean tablets and platform to improve processes and save money. When the FHT joined the CPCSSN project, they added a patient consent form to the tablet intake process. By using tablets to collect explicit patient consent, they are now realizing a savings of 62 cents per patient, resulting in an estimated total savings of approximately \$31,000.

Most recently, UOHS added the Ocean eRequest Intake Portal to their website to allow new patients to register right from the clinic site, without worrying about patient data security. A full patient history can be collected and seamlessly added to the EMR, making new patient intake easier than ever.

## Results

**STAFF EFFICIENCIES:** Reception can now manage intake for three patients at a time, instead of just one. The rule-based intake process also means reception staff don't need to make decisions about which forms a patient should complete, making their job easier and improving consistency. Time-consuming manual data entry and paper form scanning is also unnecessary.

**BETTER PATIENT DATA & PROCESSES:** Ocean tablets have helped to reduce patient chart errors with real-time patient data entry and EMR syncing. They have also allowed UOHS to ensure that patients are giving clear consent to clinic policies like missed appointments and email consent, making it easier to enforce policies.

**COST SAVINGS:** Ocean has resulted in an estimated cost savings to UOHS FHT of over 40% on patient intake by reducing paper, labels, and data storage. The FHT is also realizing a one-time savings of approximately \$31,000 through patient consent for CPCSSN enrollment.

