

Wait Times in Primary Care

Taming of the Queue IV
April 5, 2007

John M Maxted MD MBA CCFP FCFP
AED, Health & Public Policy, CFPC



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

- ◆ Position Statement 2005
- ◆ Public & Family Physician Polls 2006
- ◆ Discussion Paper 2006
- ◆ Complexities of Care



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Wait Times Position Statement December 2005



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Wait Times Position Statement

- **Benchmarks, targets & universal access to care**
 - All Canadians – an opportunity to have a family doctor – access in continuum
- **Jurisdictional responsibility and accountability**
 - Pan-Canadian wait time benchmarks and targets w/PT responsibilities to meet
- **Measurement**
 - Standardized criteria defining patient eligibility
- **Funding**
 - Single payer – publicly funded – medically necessary – potential for delivery outside of patient's normal care settings
- **Communications and expectations**
 - Patients – clear explanation of acceptable wait times – progress on wait lists



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Wait Times Position Statement

CONTINUUM OF CARE ...

Wait time benchmarks should be developed for the time it takes people to find / identify a personal family physician for their ongoing care, for appointments with a family doctor for a given problem, and for appointments for investigations or consultations with other specialists made by family doctors on behalf of their patients.

BEYOND THE FIVE ...

Wait time benchmarks and targets should be developed for medical problems well beyond those defined by the First Ministers.

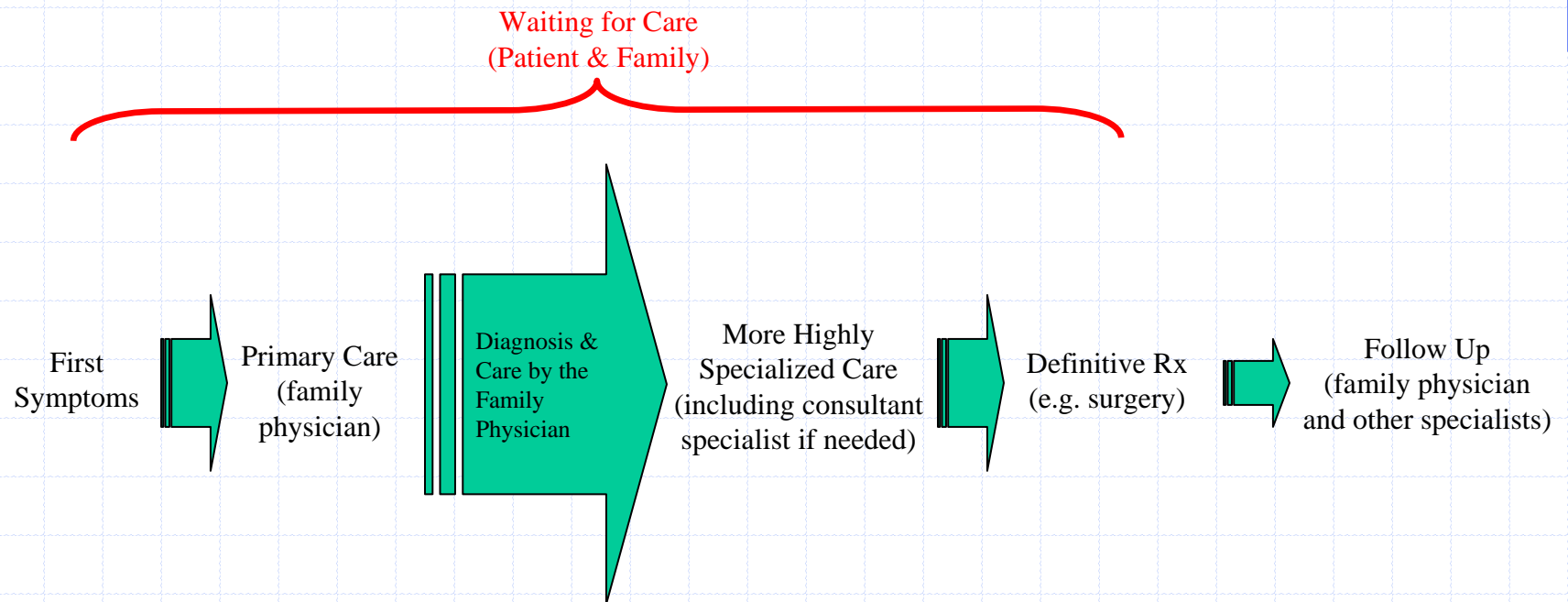


The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

CONTINUUM OF CARE ...

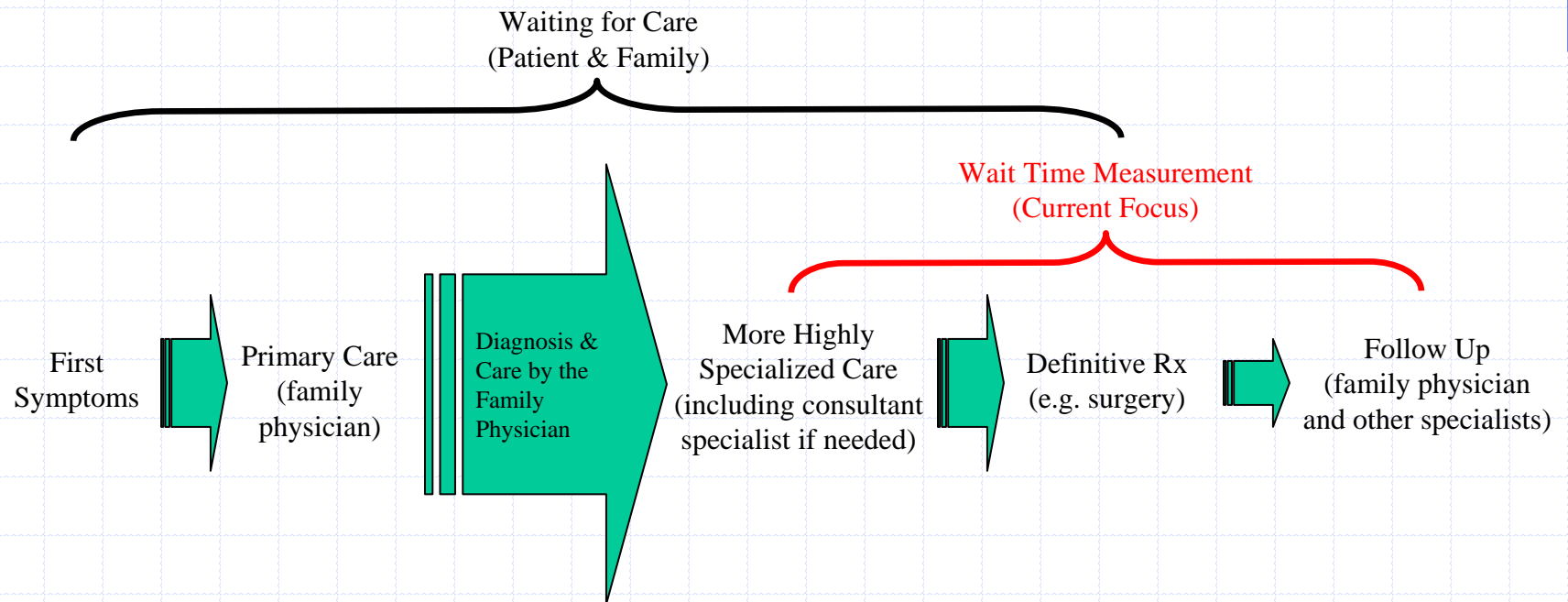


The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

CONTINUUM OF CARE ...

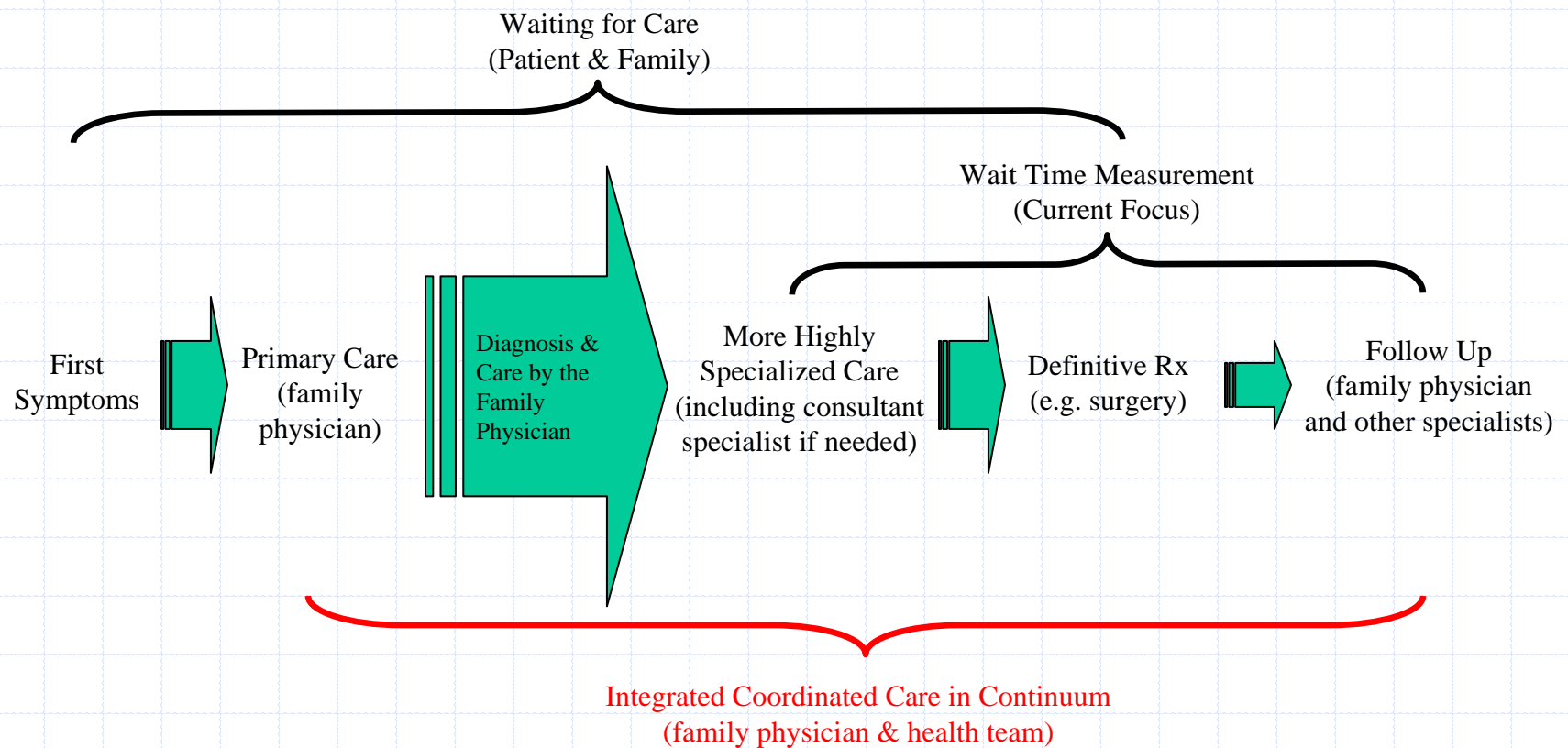


The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

CONTINUUM OF CARE ...



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Public (Decima) & Family Physician Polls
September 2006

BEYOND THE FIVE ...



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Public Poll

- 17% of Canadians without a family physician and approx 40% looking but could not find one
- 45% referred in previous year – orthopaedics / cardiology
- One in four Canadians – *WTs unreasonably long*
- 2/3 agreement – extend beyond five – CA / children / ER



Wait Times in Primary Care

Family Physician Poll

- 1:2 FPs – *WTs to consultation unreasonably long*
- Five most difficult consultations – Orthopaedics / Neurology / Psychiatry / Gastroenterology / Dermatology
- Majority – most significant frustration – time to get a consultation



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

When the Clock Starts Ticking

Wait Times in Primary Care

Discussion Paper

October 2006



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

The Paper - Challenges in PCWT Measurement

- 1) Number of Canadians without a family physician
- 2) Lack of evidence-based studies for PCWT
- 3) Focus on data related to government's five defined areas
- 4) Current focus on mainly highly specialized services
- 5) Understanding WTs for undifferentiated conditions in PC
- 6) Clinical guidelines to define diagnostic criteria that create wait lists
- 7) Responsibility for providers to meet WT benchmarks
- 8) Potential to increase other tensions within the health system



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

The Paper - Recommendations

- a) Define acceptable PCWTs with levels of urgency:
 - i) To find a family physician
 - ii) To be seen by their own family physician
 - iii) To be seen by consulting specialists

- b) WTs for other services within & beyond five

- c) Gov't support for funding & resources



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

The Paper - Recommendations

- d) System supports – timely access to comprehensive care in continuum
- e) Gov't support for PCWTs from WTA & CPA Reports
- f) Remedies – address FP shortages & pan-Canadian HHR planning



Wait Times in Primary Care

The Paper - Recommendations

- g) Education – students & residents re-WTs
- h) New ways to schedule patients in PC / family practice
- i) Alliance led by CFPC / CMA to study PCWTs

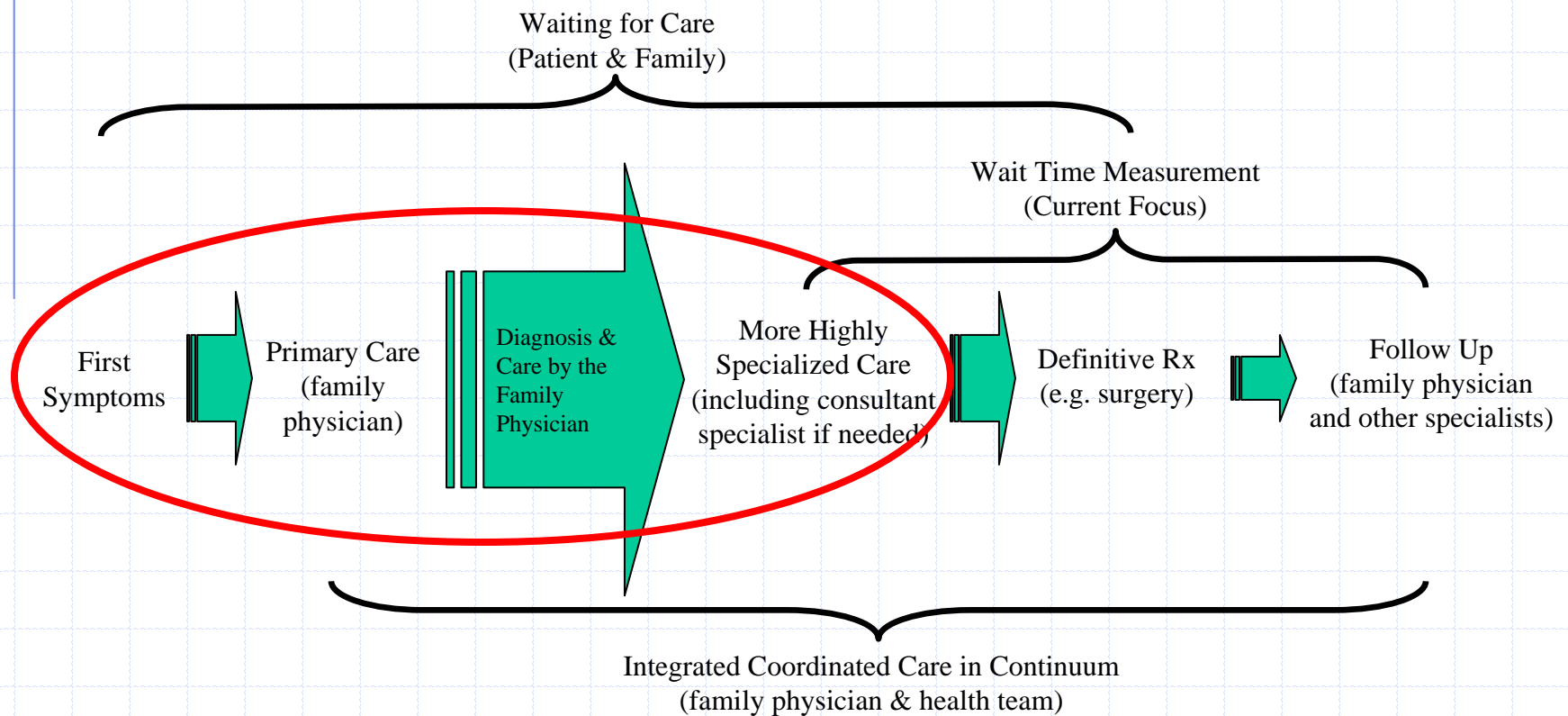


The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Measuring wait times in primary care is complex ...



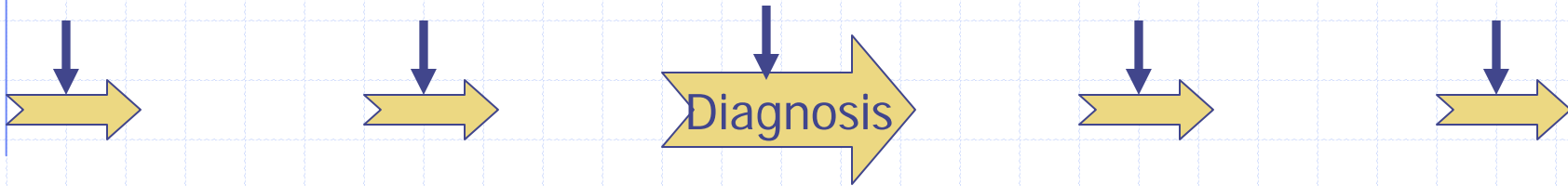
The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Complexity of PCWT Measurement

Continuum of Care - when does the clock start?



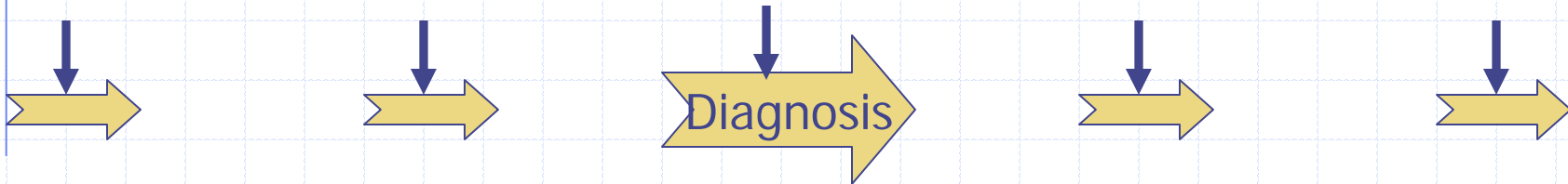
The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Complexity of PCWT Measurement

Continuum of Care - when does the clock start?



◆ Contributing to Complexity:

- Number of Canadians without a FP
- Time to see your own FP
- Measuring time from referral for a wide variety of conditions



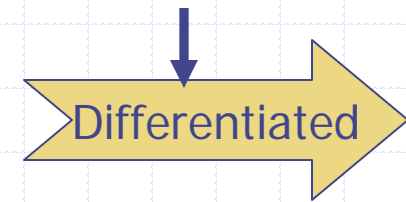
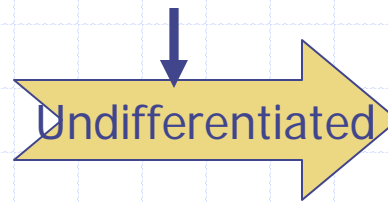
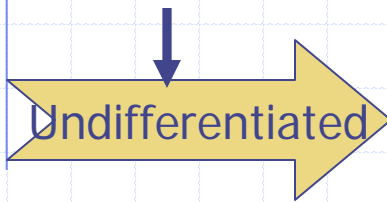
The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Complexity of PCWT Measurement

Differentiation of Care – when does the clock start?



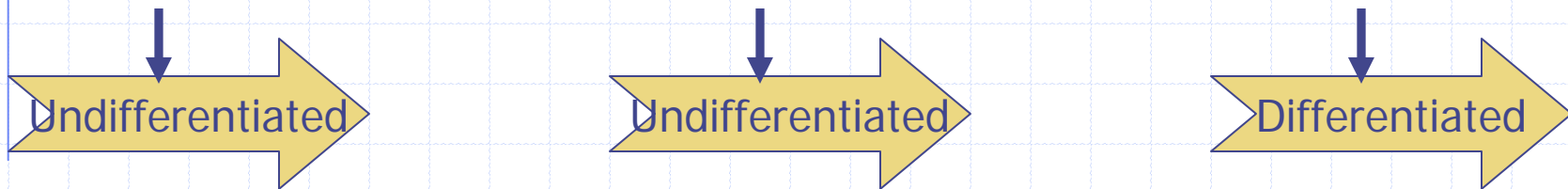
The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Complexity of PCWT Measurement

Differentiation of Care – when does the clock start?



◆ Contributing to Complexity:

- Differentiation of undifferentiated conditions
- Application of diagnostic criteria to be put on a wait list
- Wait list management for retrospective diagnoses



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Complexity of PCWT Measurement

Diversity of Care – which encounter starts the clock?



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Complexity of PCWT Measurement

Diversity of Care – which encounter starts the clock?



◆ Contributing to Complexity:

- Breadth of workload and volumes in primary care
- Which diagnoses get prioritized?
- What to do with WTs for care (prim & sec) that is never referred



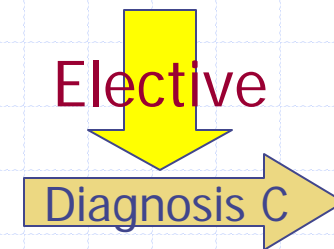
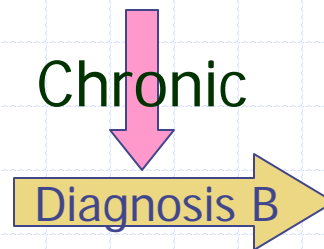
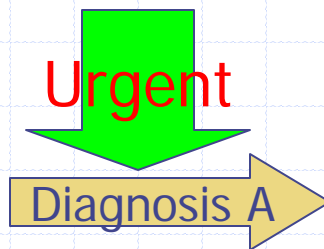
The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Complexity of PCWT Measurement

Urgency of Care – how fast should the clock tick?



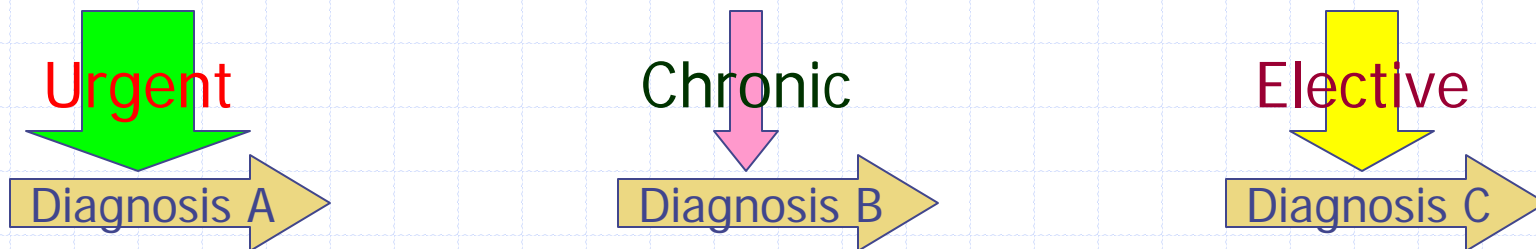
The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Complexity of PCWT Measurement

Urgency of Care – how fast should the clock tick?



◆ Contributing to Complexity:

- Different levels of urgency – cross-cutting – creating a *matrix*
- Depends on diagnosis and acuity as well as other factors
- Even relates to undifferentiated conditions



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Other Factors Contributing to Complexity

Appropriateness:

- When should a patient be placed on a list?
- What diagnostic criteria should be used?
- Did the clock start ticking before this encounter?
- When / how should a patient come off a list?
- Do patients start at the beginning if placed back on?
- Who is responsible to track the list for patients?



Wait Times in Primary Care

Other Factors Contributing to Complexity

Professional responsibility:

- To manage patient expectations
- To meet diagnostic criteria
- To help patients access a list
- To track the progress of patients
- To manage patients when benchmark not attained
- To access care by levels of urgency in spite of "crowding out"



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

Wait Times in Primary Care

Other Factors Contributing to Complexity

Role of clinical judgment:

- Goal – timely access to care
- Patients value continuity even if wait times delayed
- Patients need to understand criteria for wait lists
- Undifferentiated conditions need attention, sometimes urgent, even if they don't fit criteria or lists
- Use of best evidence & expert opinion -> flexibility
- Co-morbidities are complicating factors



Wait Times in Primary Care

Further development ...

CFPC-CMA Primary Care Wait Time Partnership

Mandate – to explore the complex issues of PCWTs and to develop evidence-based benchmarks for timely access to primary care and from there to more highly specialized care, linked to levels of urgency



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

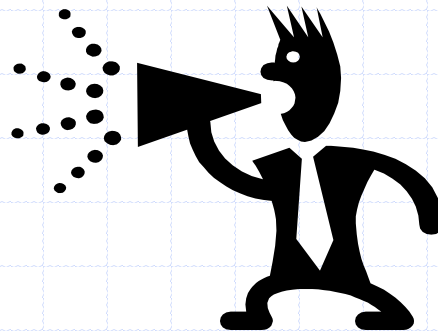
Wait Times in Primary Care

Further development ...

CFPC-CMA Primary Care Wait Time Partnership

Mandate – to explore the complex issues of PCWTs and to develop evidence-based benchmarks for timely access to primary care and from there to more highly specialized care, linked to levels of urgency

Stay tuned ... !



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada