
Health Council of Canada



Conseil canadien de la santé

Waiting for Waitlists Five Years Later

A National Overview from the
Health Council of Canada

Les Vertesi MD

Taming of the Queue V (April 15, 2008)



But First ... A Little History

- ❖ 2002: Romanow and Kirby Reports
- ❖ 2003 FPT Accord
- ❖ Formation of Health Council of Canada
 - “...to monitor and report to Canadians on progress”
- ❖ 2004 FPT Accord
 - From “timely access” to “Meaningful reductions”.
 - More \$\$ specified



Comparing the Two Accords

2003 Accord

- ❖ “sustainable and affordable”
- ❖ Timely access as a general goal
- ❖ Shopping list of other initiatives
 - Primary Care
 - Catastrophic Drug Coverage
 - Home Care
 - Others ...

2004 Accord

- ❖ “Meaningful reductions”
- ❖ Benchmarks by end of 2005
- ❖ achieve ‘evidence-based’ benchmarks in priority areas by each jurisdiction by end 2007.
- ❖ Annual reporting
- ❖ ‘Patient Charter’ (Jan 2006)
- ❖ → Wait Time Guarantees



What Happened?

- ❖ A lot of Money was Transferred:
 - 36 \$B over 5 Years (2003 -> 2008)
 - Additional 41 \$B over TEN Yrs (2004 -> 2014)
 - Includes 5.5 \$B for Wait Times Reduction Fund
- ❖ Chaouilli Decision (June 2005)
 - “...access to a waiting list is not access to health care”
- ❖ Benchmarks:
 - Wait Time Alliance offers their suggestions
 - FPT Benchmark Times for Selected Procedures (Dec 2006)
- ❖ Wait time guarantees announced by federal government:
 - Provinces agree to selected guarantees (April 2007)
 - 612 \$m



The Benchmarks

	Benchmarks for Wait Times	
Procedure	WTA	Federal
Hip/Knee Joint Replacement	24 Weeks	26 weeks
Cataract Removal	16 weeks	16 weeks
Radiation Therapy	10 days	4 weeks
MRI or CT Imaging	4 weeks	N/A
Coronary Bypass Surgery		
Routine	6 weeks	26 Weeks
Level 2 Urgent	2 weeks	6 weeks

WTA Benchmarks were intended as MAXIMUM Times



What's the Rush?

- ❖ Canada Health Council
 - ***Ten Steps to a Common Framework for Reporting on Wait Times (Nov 2005)***
- ❖ Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI):
 - ***Wait Time Measurement Symposium (Oct 2005)***
- ❖ Similar recommendations by both groups



What Did HCC and CIHI Suggest?

Common Agreement Needed on:

- When does the Wait Start, when does it End?
- Using metrics: (median, average, percentiles, Pct Within Benchmark)
- Inclusions /Exclusions
 - (do not mix emergencies with electives)
- Intelligent use of “urgency” levels
 - Not too many. Largest problems with lowest urgency
- Separate tracking of “Wait to Referral”
 - (1/3 of total wait)
- The Meaning of Benchmarks :
 - Implications of Benchmarks, Targets Times and Guarantees



First the Good News

❖ **There has been some progress ...**

- Wait Times no longer dominate the headlines
- All provinces have public websites with details on actual waits by site /procedure
- Data quality is improving
- All Ten Provinces are reporting on Cancer, Cardiac, Joint Replacements, and Cataract Surgery
- limited wait time guarantee in place in each province
- There are “trends” suggesting shorter waits
 - (CIHI Report on Wait Times - Feb 2008):



And the Not-So-Good

Adapted from CIHI Wait Times Report – Feb 2008

- ❖ **“...reported wait times are not yet comparable”**
- ❖ Only FIVE provinces are reporting on all 5 priority areas
- ❖ Mixed definitions of start time
 - “Decision to treat” vs. “Ready for treatment”
 - None include wait time to first referral
- ❖ Mixed inclusions / exclusions of emergency cases
- ❖ Mixed Use of Different Metrics
 - medians, averages, percentiles, ranges, pct within benchmark
- ❖ Data improvements (cleaning) are welcome but create an illusion of improvement
 - Difficult to tell from real progress



Making Sense of Wait Times

Adapted from CIHI Wait Time Tables – Feb 2008

Radiation Oncology National Treatment Times		
National Benchmark = 4 weeks		
Province	Metric Used	Reported Values
BC and MB	Median	1 week
SK and AB	Median	4.5 weeks
NL and NB	PWB	95%
PQ	PWB	85% to 100%
ON	PWB	50% within 14 days
PEI	Median	1.6 wks
NS	Range	0 to 5.1 wks



Making Sense (2)

Adapted from CIHI Wait Time Tables – Feb 2008

Cardiovascular/Cardiac Surgery		
Benchmark = 26 weeks (elective CABG)		
Province	Metric Used	Reported Values
NB	Median (electives only)	10 d
PQ	PWB range	50% to 100%
ON	Median (electives only)	18 d
MB	Median (all)	26 d
SK	Median (electives only)	8 d
AB	Median	9 d
BC	Median	64 d



Making Sense (3)

Adapted from CIHI Wait Time Tables – Feb 2008

Table 3-1 Specific Cardiac Services Reported by Provinces and Reporting Unit*

	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.**	Man.	Sask.†	Alta.	B.C.
Services Reported										
Cardiovascular Surgery			•					• ^{††}		
Cardiac Surgery					• ^{**}	•	•		•	•
Bypass Surgery	• ^{§§}			•	•	•	•	•	• [†]	
Angioplasty			•		•	•				
Catheterization			•	• [§]	•	•				



Making Sense (4)

Adapted from CIHI Wait Time Tables – Feb 2008

Bypass Surgery Wait Times		
Benchmark = 26 weeks (elective CABG)		
Province	Metric Used	Reported Values
NB	PWB (6 mos) *	96%
NL	PWB (26 wks)	92%
ON	90th Percentile Wait Tm	61 d
MB	Median (electives only)	46 d
SK	PWB (3 months)	94%
AB	Median	6 d
BC		

* NB uses last consult date as start time

** MB and SK Wait Times include emergency cases



Making Sense (5)

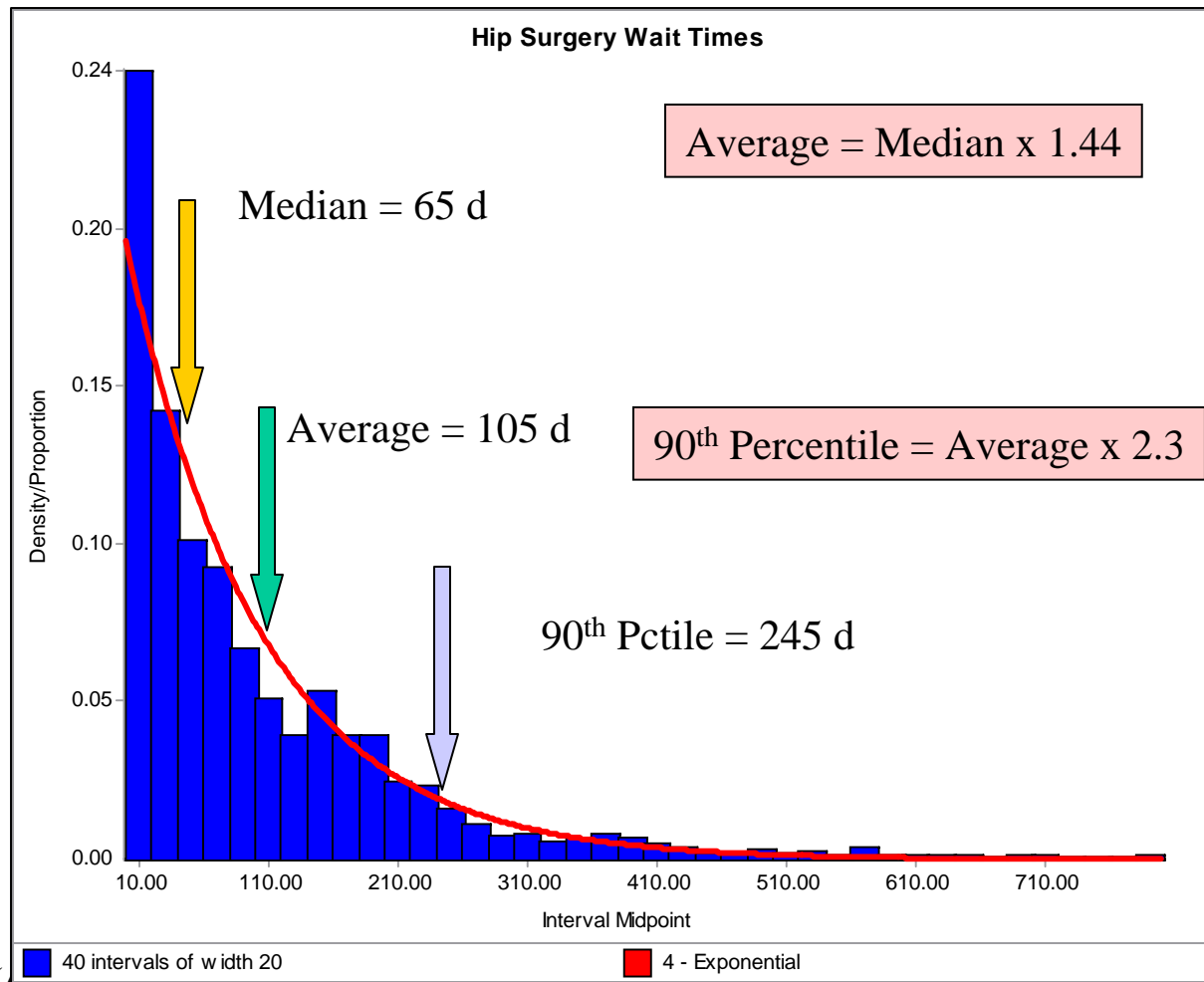
Adapted from CIHI Wait Time Tables – Feb 2008

Reported Waits for Joint Replacement Surgery			
Benchmark = 26 weeks (182 d)			
Province	Metric Used	Hips	Knees
NL	PWB range	79% to 100%	70 - 96%
PEI	Median	77d	133 d
NS	PWB	36%	29%
NB	PWB	67%	52%
PQ	PWB	95%	90%
ON	90th Percentile	210 d	291 d
MB	Median (range)	133 to 385 d	112 to 168 d
SK	PWB (12 months)	79%	62%
AB	Median	92 d	120 d
BC	Median	72 d	112 d

Adapted from CIHI Report – Feb 2008

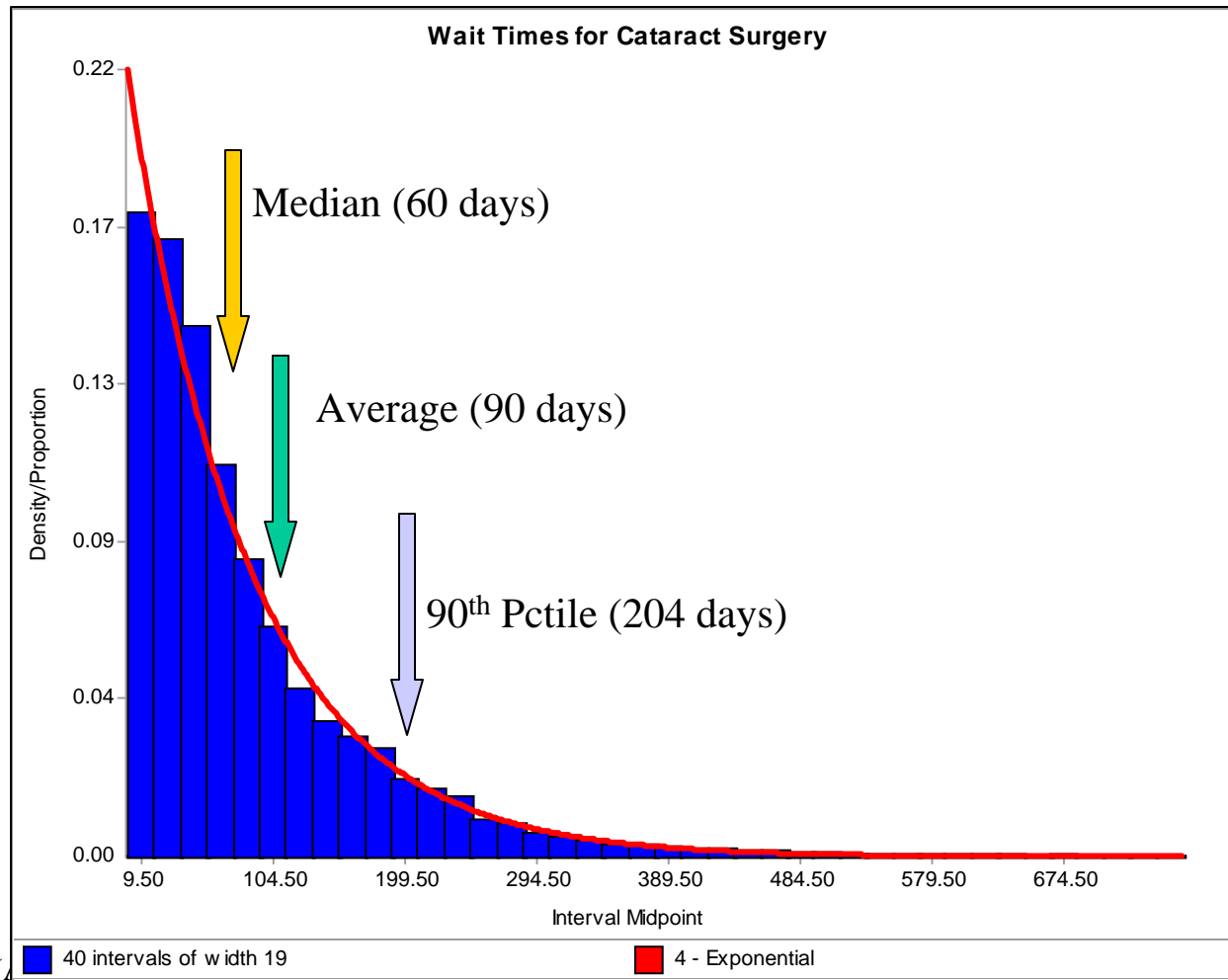


Example 1: Hip Surgery (one RHA in BC)





Example 2: Cataract Surgery (one RHA in BC)



A Common Language Helps



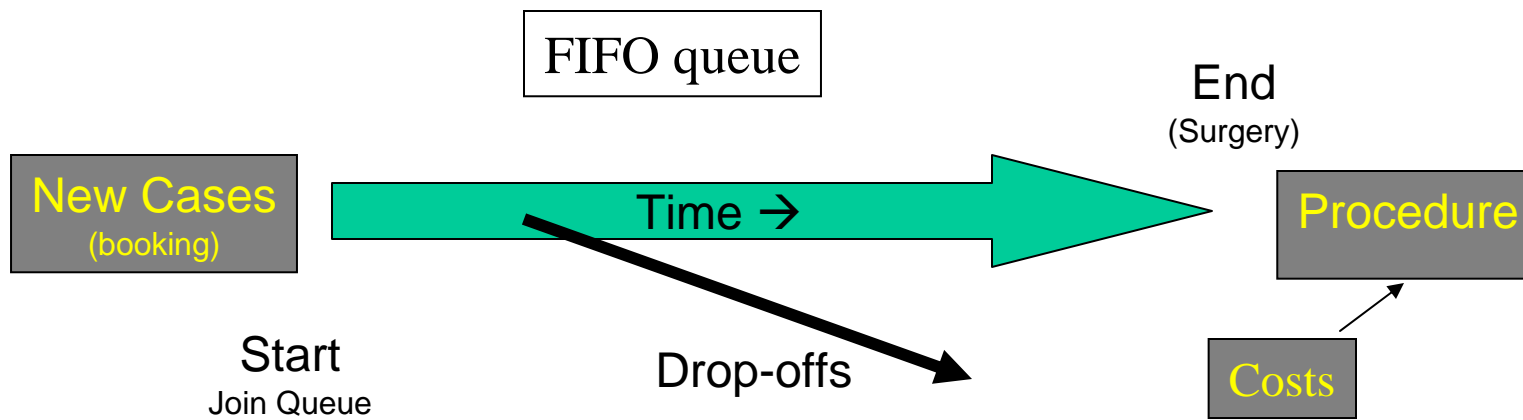


What's Missing?

1. If We Want to Compare:
 - **Agree on Common Metrics**
2. Do We Understand What We Are Measuring?
3. The Elephant

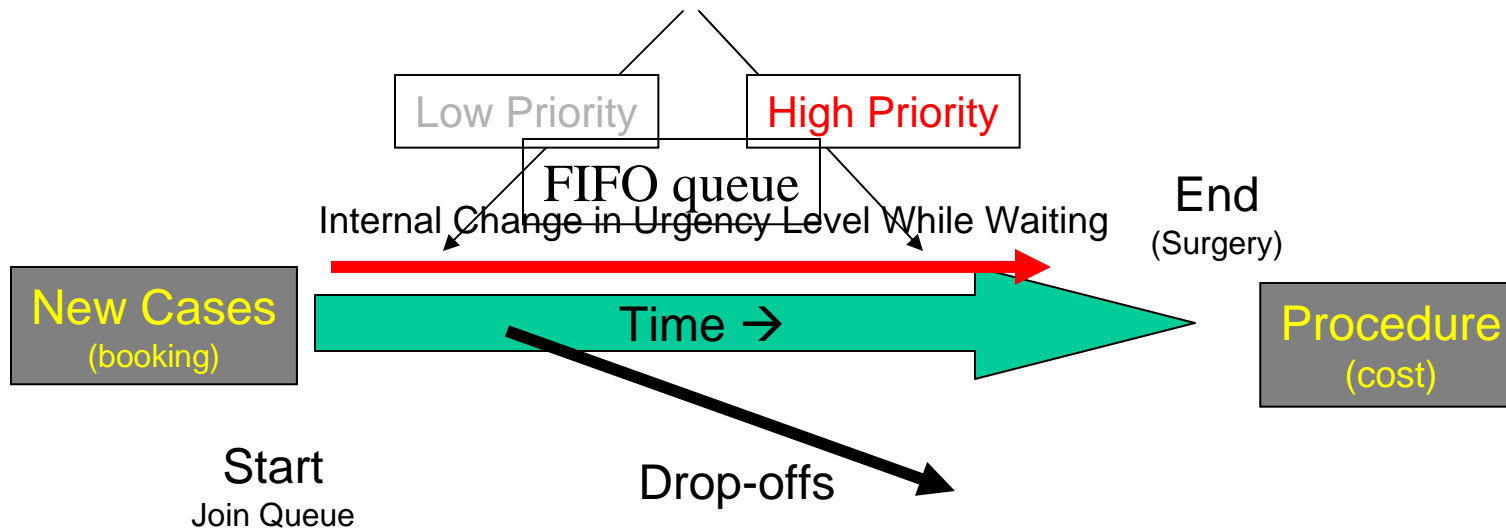


What Are We Measuring?



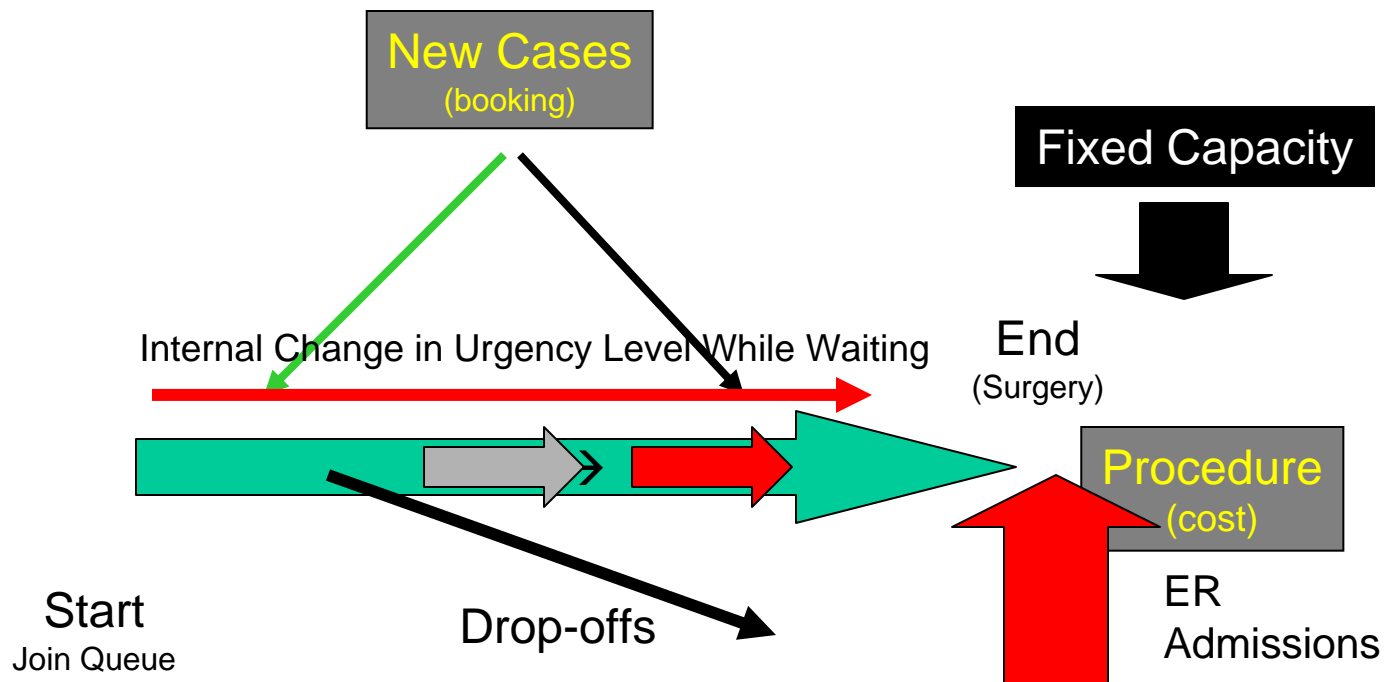


Adding New Cases to a Waitlist





When does a Queue Go in Reverse?





Waitlist Example: One RHA in BC

As of March 2007

Cohort	Count	Avg Wait	NWB	PWB
Group 1 (DONE)	168	97	146	87%
Group 2 (Drop-offs)	115	261	58	50%
Group 3a (Never Done)	523	369	218	42%
Group 3b (Done After)	307	136	205	67%
Total Wait Times	1113	253	627	56%

Group 1: Cases completing surgery during March 2007

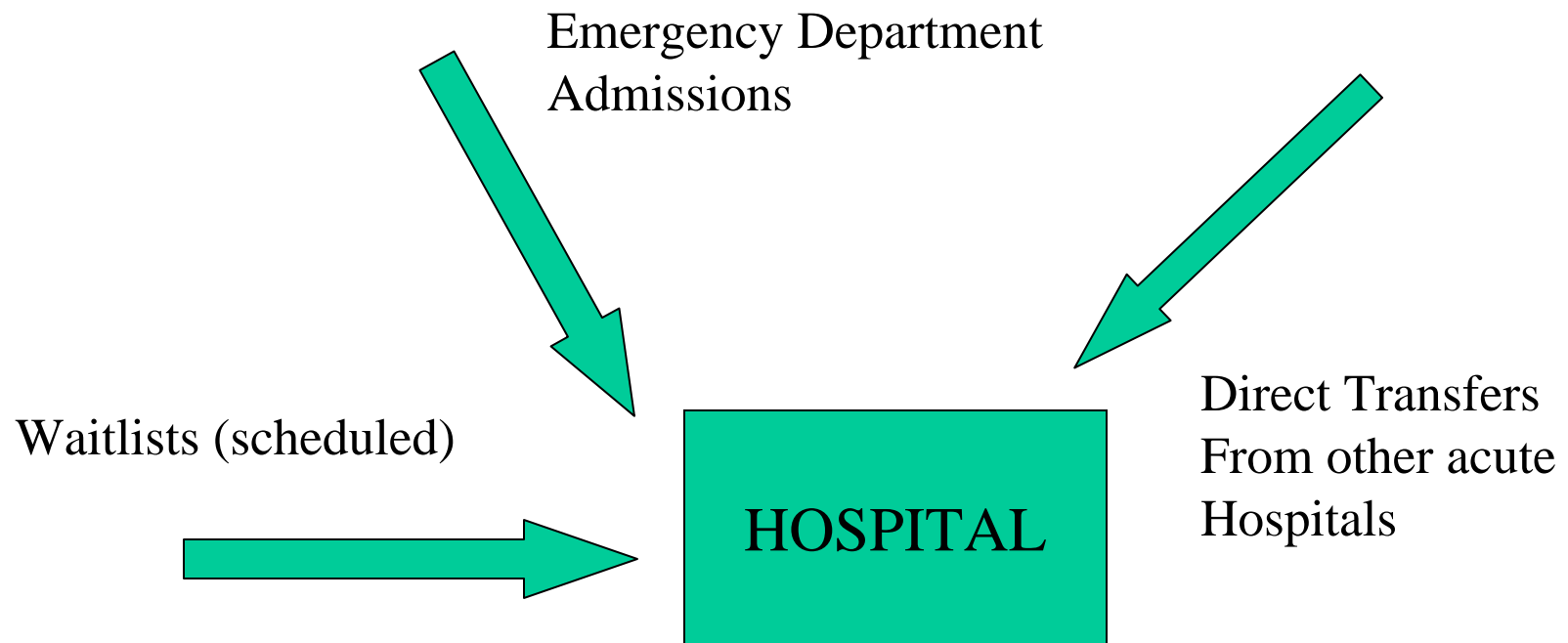
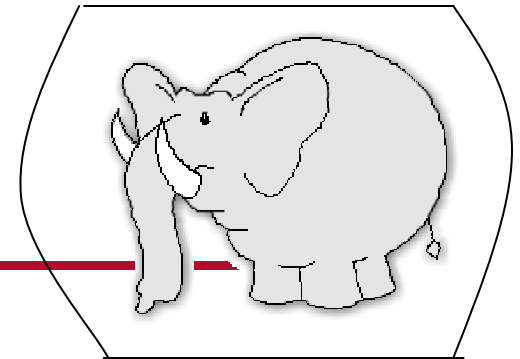
Group 2: Cases Dropping Off WL during March 2007

Group 3a: Cases that were NEVER done & still waiting

Group 3b: Cases Done after Mar 2007 but still on WL as of end of March



The Elephant



How Much Capacity is Left for Scheduled Surgery?



How Big is the Elephant?

Example: Eleven Hospitals in one RHA in BC

Mem	Stream	Cases	ALOS	TotDays
EM	Emergency	57,042	9.7	551,797
D1	Scheduled	18,851	5.3	99,997
D2	Transfers	4,632	15.6	72,297
Combined	Total	80,525	9.0	724,092



ESR (Emergent / Scheduled Ratio) = (EM+Transfers)/Total

ESR = 86%

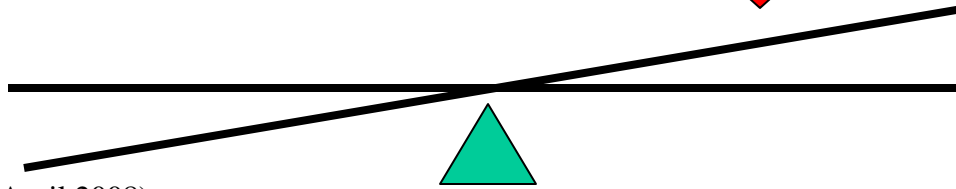
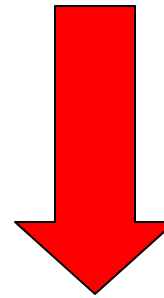
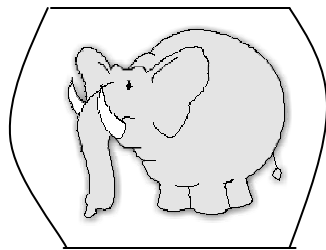
Range 82% → 91%



There's an Elephant in Your Waitlist

86%

14%



Vertesi - TQ5 (April 2008)



Conclusion



Vertesi - TQ5 (April 2008)