

## SAVE MY SPOT

*CoxHealth puts patients in charge of scheduling immediate care*

### COX HEALTH AT A GLANCE

- 6-hospital health system based in Springfield, Mo.
- Serves 24 counties in Missouri
- 238,000 ER, urgent care and trauma visits
- 80 clinics with 959,000 annual visits



### CASE STUDY

The immersive, team-based AHA Innovation 90 program ([ahainnovation.org](http://ahainnovation.org)) enables hospital teams to tackle innovation problems and produce a solution ready for implementation in 90 days. **Here's an example of one team's success.**

Whether it's adding more entry points, or simply speeding up a patient's ability to be seen, southwest Missouri-based CoxHealth continually looks for ways to improve patient access to care. In the current climate where convenience is king, one way to accomplish this is by providing patients with more control over where and when they'd like to be treated — and helping them understand which avenue, whether it's a trip to the emergency department (ED) or a visit to a retail clinic, is most appropriate for their level of acuity.

That's why, when the six-hospital health system was invited to participate in a new American Hospital Association (AHA) project called AHA Innovation 90, leaders jumped at the opportunity, and chose to focus on optimizing patient access. Innovation 90 engages hospital teams in a boot camp-style, rapid-cycle change process to improve care and/or lower costs.

"The problem with most hospitals and systems is they offer a wide range of outpatient care. They've got physician offices and clinics. They've got urgent care clinics and the minute clinics inside drug stores. They have a fast track, which is a minor care unit in the ED or next to the ED, and, of course, they have the emergency room," said Tom Fee, an Innovation 90 consultant who worked with CoxHealth. "What happens is people don't know where they should go when they feel sick. What you're trying to do is help them identify how urgent or non-urgent their problem is and what the fastest class of quality care might be available to them through the health care system."



## ABOUT INNOVATION 90

The American Hospital Association's Innovation 90 program's coaches guide hospital teams step by step over 90 days to create solutions that simplify operations, reduce costs and build alignment. The process includes:

- A health system or hospital spends time identifying a challenge and creating a three- to five-member team to tackle it.
- The team attends a three-day boot camp led by an AHA Innovation 90 Coach, who guides them through the process of refining the challenge, analyzing relevant data, building prototypes and outlining a project plan.
- The team returns home with a minimum viable product and a prototype.
- For the remaining 87 days, the team refines and begins implementation of an innovation.



## WHERE IS THE MOST APPROPRIATE AND **CONVENIENT POINT OF CARE?**

Innovation 90 involves small teams from a health system heading off-site, in this case to Duke University, for three days of training. Among the CoxHealth team members were Kari DiCianni, system director of performance improvement and implementation; Amanda Hedgpeth, vice president of clinical services; Jann Holland, vice president of marketing and corporate communications; Scott Rogers, system director for performance integration and innovation; and David Taylor, corporate vice president. "In all, our team had three vice presidents and two system directors, so when we got to Duke, we realized we could make a lot of decisions on the spot," Rogers said.

One problem they addressed was patients' confusion over the appropriateness of care avenues. CoxHealth offers virtual visits, and has a number of urgent care centers and dozens of clinics, including a relationship with Wal-Mart (and Hy-Vee) for walk-in clinics. There are many physician offices and urgent cares. There is even a hospital-based urgent care center with a higher level of services, including radiology. And there is the ED.

"Our virtual visits get you to a nurse practitioner, but some patients still need to see someone in person, so they wind up at a clinic with potentially long wait times," Rogers said. "We really thought we have got to give control to the consumer, help them make an informed decision on the appropriate level of care they need. We also wanted to let them choose which site is convenient for them."

## DEVELOPING A PROTOTYPE

The immediate outcome of the Innovation 90 boot camp is a prototype that can be tested by talking to patients or other stakeholders, then refined into a second prototype, and retested, with the goal of the third iteration being a “minimum viable product.” This is something that can be piloted with full knowledge that experience will lead to significant changes before it is fully deployed.

Of great help, Rogers said, were short daily “scrum” calls between the CoxHealth innovation team and Fee, which kept propelling the process forward once the team returned home from Duke. “I was the scrum call facilitator. In about an average of eight minutes per call, we could crank through where we were, what we did that day and what barriers we were confronting. It was a great way to pace the process and the implementation.”

The solution CoxHealth came up with for its access issue is an online program, embedded in the health system’s website, called Save My Spot. “This program was a game-changer, putting total control in the customer’s hands, giving them information and empowering them to select a time that works best for them,” Rogers said.

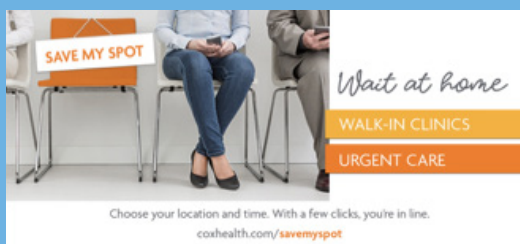
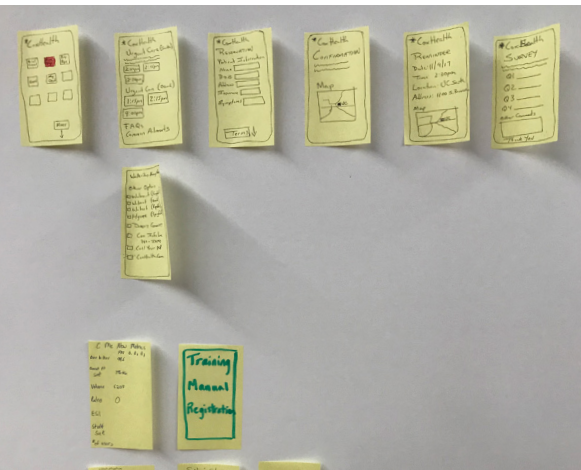
A patient logs into the CoxHealth website where they will see a link on the homepage to Save My Spot. A series of dialogue boxes takes the individual through the process of finding the right location and reserving a spot in a walk-in clinic or urgent care facility.

The team was prepped to overcome the expected skepticism of those who would be affected by the change — a common trait in health care organizations. Rogers said there were surprisingly few hurdles. “Obviously, cybersecurity is a big deal. Another one was the registration staff, which is centralized. The urgent care group is the one driving this, but it would affect the registration staff, so we needed to make sure we got their buy-in and find out what they needed to be engaged in the program,” said Rogers.

The first prototype was tested by asking anyone who had been a patient in an urgent care or had a family member who had recently visited one to participate in a focus group session. “We asked them a number of questions and then we showed them screenshots of an app that was live in another hospital. After that, we did a soft launch [in February 2018], just putting some appointments out there and letting people find it, without advertising it,” Rogers said.

With more than 12,000 employees and their families, people quickly found the program. “We started seeing people like one of our system directors, whose daughter got sick and she grabbed one of the no-wait appointments, and told us, ‘This is the greatest thing ever.’”

Following the soft launch, the innovation team conducted a survey, which found uniformly positive results.



## INITIAL SURVEY RESULTS\*

Total check-in patients: **131**

Discharged: **74% (97 patients)**

**96%** of patients waited <20 min to be taken back to a room

**100%** of patients said they would recommend online check-in

**43%** of patients were influenced by online check-in to choose CoxHealth

\*From soft launch among CoxHealth employees/families/friends/random site visitors. Results as of March 21, 2018.

## Save Your Spot in Line

2:30 PM Friday, March 23 (COT)

04:24

### Patient Information

All fields are required unless otherwise specified.

Please enter patient's symptoms

Patient First Name

Patient Last Name

Patient Date of Birth

Patient Gender

Cell

Patient Phone #

Patient Email

Has the patient visited this health system before?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Would you like to be notified via text?

Yes

No

May 4 data rules may apply

#### Terms and Conditions

☐

I understand that Online Check-in is not to be used for life threatening conditions. I do not believe that the patient's condition is life threatening. In case of life threatening conditions, I understand that I must call 911 immediately or proceed directly to the nearest emergency room for immediate medical attention. [What does this mean?](#)

☐

I consent to be contacted by email, and understand that the email may contain sensitive, personal health information. I understand that email messages have inherent privacy risks and that information may be seen or accessible to others during transmission. [Read more about these risks.](#) [Read our privacy policy.](#)

Submit

## PUBLIC LAUNCH

On March 27, the application was launched for the general public, including an advertising campaign. All urgent care and walk-in clinic locations utilize the service.

The program had an immediate benefit of smoothing out the urgent care center daily schedule. "When it opens, there's always a waiting line, especially on Mondays. We work through lots of patients, but by 10:30, 11:00 a.m., you start seeing a little bit of a lull. That continues until 2:30 or 3:00 in the afternoon, when kids are out of school and it picks back up. What we see is if we put the scheduled appointments out there at 10:00, 10:15, 10:30, 10:45, etc., more people are opting to stay at home until their appointment, which they love, so the feedback in our patient satisfaction surveys has been phenomenal. And we have smoothed out the schedule, so the staff are not overwhelmed; they are happier," said Rogers.

The CoxHealth innovation team has continued its relationship with Innovation 90. "Tom (Fee) has been fantastic," Rogers said. "We've been bouncing ideas off him ever since our boot camp. And now we have four other Innovation 90 projects in the works. We are training new people as scrum masters, folks who have Lean [Six Sigma] experience. This has taken the pace and impact of our innovation to a whole new level."



### Interested in participating in the next Innovation 90 Bootcamp?

Contact Carl Aiello at [caiello@aha.org](mailto:caiello@aha.org) or visit us online at [www.ahainnovation.org](http://www.ahainnovation.org) for pricing and more information.