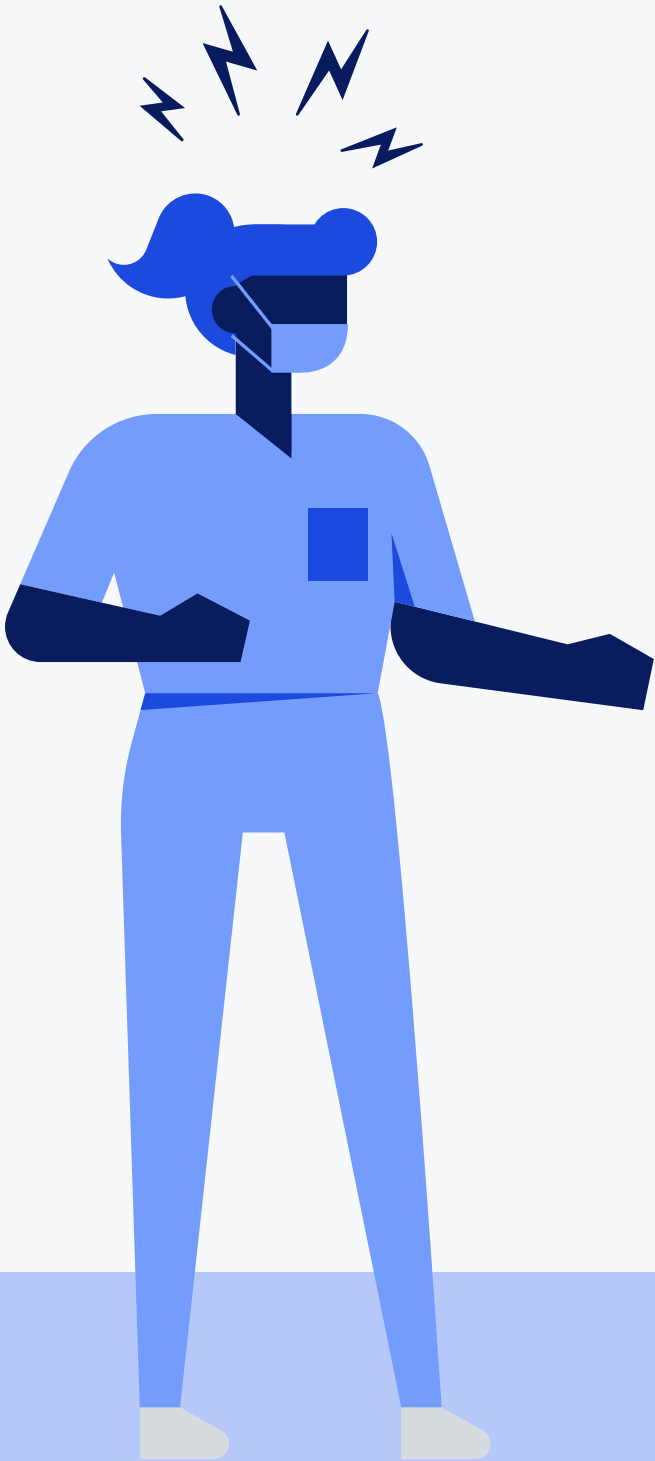EBOOK

Increase Capacity Using Your Existing Beds and Staff

Proactively align beds, patients, and staff across the entire health system

LeanTaaS

leantaas.com

Recurring Daily Issues Result in Major Systemic Issues

Managing inpatient capacity is one of the most critical challenges for health systems. It requires a daily balancing act of coordinating bed availability, patient throughput, and staffing needs in unison to ensure optimal patient care and collaboration across care teams to ensure timely discharges and make room for new patient admissions. While leaders and frontline teams start each day with the goal of providing high quality, timely care for their patients, unexpected issues such as discharge barriers and delays, unbalanced staffing, patient boarding, changing priorities, and many others occur which ultimately impact their ability to achieve their patient care goals. Very quickly, these daily issues cascade into systemic issues that reduce the health system's ability to operate efficiently:

- **Capacity limitations:** As a result of not being able to proactively plan for changes in patient demand, health systems can get overloaded resulting in long wait times, overcrowding, and both transfer and ED diversion.

- **Inefficient throughput:** When priorities across care teams are not aligned, discharges are delayed and both lengths of stay and boarding in intake areas increase, ultimately reducing capacity across the system.

- **Unbalanced staffing:** Staffing shortages have resulted in a situation where nurses are facing unmanageable workloads, increased turnover, and excessive use of premium pay. If they reach a point where staff are stretched to the maximum and no one else can come in, beds are closed due to short staffing, which further reduces the already limited capacity across the health system.

Ultimately, these systemic issues not only impact the health system's bottom line, but more importantly impact their ability to deliver on their primary goal of providing the highest quality care possible.

The underlying challenge related to both the daily and systemic issues is the complexity of the interconnected activities that go into delivering patient care each day. Each day starts with a set number of patients and a roster of scheduled nurses. If it started and ended there, it would be manageable. However, as the day continues, the dynamics change:

- Nurse call-offs occur, which result in additional nurses being called in, others being asked to work later, or nurses from other units are asked to float to make up for the shortage.

- Patients are transferred to other units, which requires care coordination between the units and potentially reallocating the nursing staff.
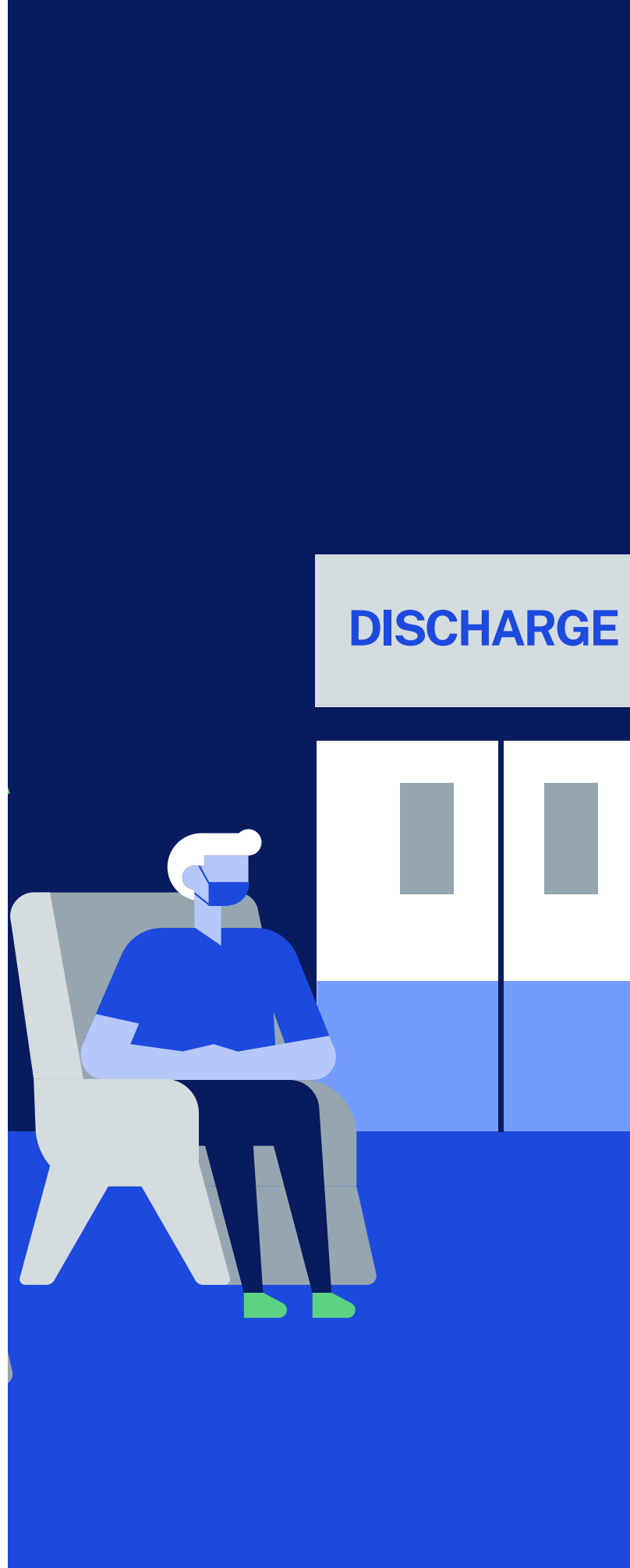
DISCHARGE

- Care teams collaborate to ensure patient discharges are being planned and managed, which can increase the activities of the nursing staff to ensure barriers are identified and addressed.

- New patients are admitted into the hospital, which requires that beds are available for them and the nursing staff is available to ensure appropriate care coverage.

As a result, hospital leaders and frontline teams spend their day trying to ensure their physical capacity and staff are available to accommodate fluctuating patient demand, which is incredibly challenging because of the manual, time-consuming processes most health systems rely on to admit, transfer, and discharge patients. What's more, these processes often aren't standardized from hospital to hospital - or even unit to unit - meaning that tribal knowledge carries a lot of the weight. That also creates a huge mental burden for leaders and frontline nurses. While everyone is doing their best to manage this daily complexity, without the right tools to support this work, they are left in a constant reactive state of managing their capacity.

> While this problematic cycle has persisted for years, it was pushed to a breaking point by the Covid pandemic. Extreme stress on the healthcare delivery system elevated these issues from inefficiencies to crisis-level challenges.

Intelligent Solutions Can Improve the Way Health Systems Work

Recognizing the major impact that these operational complexities have on the health of their system, forward-looking leaders are actively turning to technology as a means to automate the manual processes and improve collaboration across leaders and frontline teams to ensure they are better prepared to manage constantly changing patient, capacity, and staffing needs. These solutions give leaders and frontline teams the time and insights to:

Dynamically manage capacity: Through predictions of patient demand and potential bottlenecks and barriers, teams can enact plans that optimize their current resources and mitigate issues before they occur.

Prepare their staff: The most manual and cumbersome processes are automated to eliminate repetitive tasks and drive action across teams to the most critical activities.

Remove operational silos: By connecting teams through improved communication and providing real-time insights to current and future operations, work becomes more collaborative and efficient.

Leaders and frontline teams are then better prepared to address the systemic issues that hinder their ability to meet their patient care goals; capacity limitations, inefficient throughput, and unbalanced staffing.

Proactive Capacity Planning

Effective capacity management begins with the ability to predict demand and pinpoint bottlenecks related to staffing and capacity issues. But most health systems currently have limited visibility into upcoming patient surges, taking away their ability to develop and execute mitigation plans. The result is long wait times, overcrowding in the ED and PACU, and even going on ED and transfer diversion in extreme circumstances.

Intelligent workflow automation systems predict patient surges, pinpoint barriers, and deliver actionable insights, all in real-time. This proactive approach, along with a single

cohesive view of available beds alongside discharge and staffing needs, enables teams to take immediate action, resulting in improved patient care and resource utilization.

Orchestrate Daily Discharges

Many patient flow issues stem from inefficient discharge processing, which creates a cascading effect across inpatient units. Optimizing daily discharges can have one of the most significant effects on improving patient throughput.

Intelligent workflow automation systems orchestrate discharge actions across leaders and frontline teams with real-time insights that ensure alignment across care teams, improve communication and collaboration, enabling them to make informed, data-driven decisions, and proactively address potential discharge barriers like missing tests or post-acute needs. This connected approach identifies priorities and drives action to where it's needed most, resulting in more efficient patient throughput and increased capacity.

Streamline Clinical Staffing

Siloed and reactive staffing practices result in an unbalanced distribution of staff, which ultimately impacts a hospital's ability to provide high quality patient care across all

DISCHARGE

units. Now, more than ever, efficient staffing practices are critical to a health system's ability to meet their patient care goals.

Intelligent workflow automation systems provide transparency to staffing needs against available resources - from RNs to sitters - enabling more strategic decisions on which staff is deployed to which units. Embedded communication capabilities allow nursing leaders to easily collaborate with the staffing office, giving nursing leaders precious time back so they can focus on delivering patient care while ensuring that the nursing staff is deployed to the areas where it's needed most.

When leaders support their teams and processes with a technology that removes the daily complexities, teams can reach new levels of operational efficiency that enables them to weather the toughest of storms and continuously push the boundaries of performance excellence.

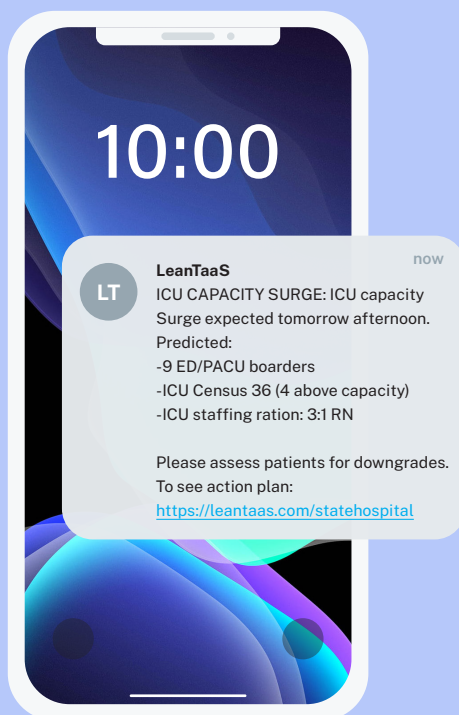## LeanTaaS: Your Digital Partner to Manage Operations

LeanTaaS Inpatient Flow empowers hospital leaders and frontline teams to coordinate bed availability, patient throughput, and staffing needs in unison to ensure capacity is available, priorities are aligned across care teams, and staff are allocated to the areas where they are needed most. Inpatient Flow gathers

and analyzes data from existing systems (e.g. EHR, patient flow, workforce management, etc) to dynamically adjust their capacity. Through technology-enabled automation and transparency, hospitals can improve the way they work by proactively managing capacity, orchestrating daily discharges, and streamlining daily staffing.

Core to the use cases and workflows within Inpatient Flow is an intelligent platform that supports every team member by constantly monitoring the operational health of their hospital to provide real-time insights and pinpoint barriers, allowing them to prepare for what's coming. This is the next evolution of visual management dashboards which, while valuable, require that a person is physically in a specific location to determine the best course of action based on one or more discrete data points, which may be viewed differently from individual to individual or unit to unit.

Instead, Inpatient Flow monitors conditions in real-time, predicts upcoming issues in census, boarding, and staffing levels based on your organization's distinct operating structure, and automatically provides not just a notification to their mobile device when certain criteria have been met, but also recommended actions for proactively mitigating the problem before it occurs. This allows teams to work more proactively, reduces the cognitive load from your staff, and allows them to redirect their time and energy to more effective care delivery.

Figure 1.0

10:00

> **LeanTaaS**   now
> ICU CAPACITY SURGE: ICU capacity Surge expected tomorrow afternoon.
> Predicted:
> -9 ED/PACU boarders
> -ICU Census 36 (4 above capacity)
> -ICU staffing ration: 3:1 RN
>
> Please assess patients for downgrades. To see action plan:
> https://leantaas.com/statehospital

What does this mean for you in practice? As an example, let's take an ICU that is predicted to be over capacity tomorrow. The intelligent platform sends a message to the ICUs nursing leaders and care management team with the details and the instructions to review patients for potential downgrades. At the same time, a message is also sent to the PACU to begin their mitigation strategy for the next day to reduce the chance of that unit backing up. In addition, transfer center teams are also notified of the potential issue, to enable them to more accurately plan patient transfers across the system.

This all happens without a single phone call, without a single nurse consulting a dashboard, without a single manual intervention. Multiple units are now moving in lock-step to relieve the burden on the ICU before it becomes a problem (see figure 1.0).

Building a Partnership to Dynamically Manage Capacity

With Inpatient Flow, real-time intelligence, automated workflows, proactive recommendations, and embedded communications make it easier to manage and maximize the utilization of capacity. But adopting a new technology into daily operations can seem like a big undertaking at a time when all parts of the health system are stretched to the max. Additionally, the tribal knowledge that leaders rely on daily to manage capacity also creates a lot of inertia, making change difficult. Even when they know something isn't working as optimally as it should, organizations can be reluctant to make a change because the unknown can sometimes be scarier than known problems.

Recognizing this, LeanTaaS' team of healthcare operations and clinical workflow experts work closely with each client to drive and support change management. Throughout the life of the partnership, from implementation through optimization, LeanTaaS works directly with key stakeholders to understand current processes and align to new priorities. This partnership ensures that rollout plans match their specific goals, empowers leadership to own the process, and engages stakeholders from all teams to create a new culture inside their organization, unlocking and sustaining capacity management improvements across the enterprise.

The Impact of Inpatient Flow

When technology is leveraged to support the health systems' people and capacity management processes , the impact to the health system can be significant:

Increased revenue
from additional patient admissions

Better margins
through reductions in length of stay

Improved care quality
from decreasing boarding in ED and PACU

Happier staff
as a result of having more time to focus on patient care

To see the Inpatient Flow in action and see what we can do for your health system, request a demo: leantaas.com/request-demo

LeanTaaS