



Unlocking Capacity for Strategic Growth and Financial Resilience

July 2025



This article highlights how organizations can position for strategic growth, improve margins, and enhance operations by maximizing the use of existing assets and workforce through enhanced patient flow and enhanced asset utilization. Our organization's deep experience addresses these complexities, meeting organizations wherever they are on their capacity management journey.

Dream a little. Imagine a world where patients receive care in the optimal clinical setting, without delay, and with the right expertise to achieve the best possible outcomes. Gone are the headaches of shoehorning patients into suboptimal care delivery due to the lack of access or coverage for rooms, surgery slots, ancillary services, post-acute care, or specialty services. For decades, providers have tried many individual strategies to address capacity challenges without true optimization. Deloitte brings a wealth of experience to address these challenges holistically, orchestrating care delivery across the enterprise for future growth and financial resilience.

In today's healthcare landscape, effectively managing capacity and patient flow is crucial for healthcare systems to achieve strategic growth while balancing financial sustainability with quality care delivery. Many organizations face challenges such as workforce shortages, limited physical expansion, and underutilized facility assets. Addressing these challenges requires a tailored approach to drive meaningful change. Healthcare systems should develop a strategic asset strategy, align acuity across facilities, redesign care and utilization management, decompress the Emergency Department (ED), and enhance patient placement to navigate these complexities. This article delves into these strategies, providing insights and solutions to optimize healthcare operations.

Deloitte's operational and clinical expertise in patient flow, perioperative, acuity alignment, and command center allows our team to develop and implement an integrated approach to driving sustainable change. By applying proven methodologies and industry insights, we help clients unlock capacity, streamline patient flow, and achieve sustainable financial results – no matter the problem.

Build a Strategic Asset Strategy

Unlock future growth capacity with a robust strategic asset strategy that addresses current needs and anticipates future demands. A successful strategy balances current patient needs, strategic growth plans, existing physical assets, and talent pools to optimize quality, efficiency, and long-term financial sustainability. Integrating growth-focused initiatives can help ensure organizations meet today's demands and position themselves to capitalize on future opportunities, drive innovation, and expand market presence. The first step in understanding capacity constraints and planning for growth is assessing current resource utilization by answering the following questions:

- What facilities / services are at capacity and cannot accept more volume when needed?
- Where is patient access a problem delaying care? Is the right coverage model in place?
- What assets are underutilized?
- How is patient demand routed to match service availability?
- Are there talent gaps to provide care in a high quality and timely manner?

Assessing current care delivery needs within existing delivery networks and bottlenecks should include a detailed accounting of asset utilization, ambulatory services, ancillary coverage, talent landscape, and process improvement prospects in patient care and healthcare delivery efficiency. In parallel, bed utilization gap analysis across inpatient facilities can identify opportune areas to balance patient needs with service acuity and potential areas to create future centers of excellence for strategic service lines. Developing a long-term service line growth strategy to preserve and thrive for financial sustainability sets the end goal where capacity is needed in the future state. Understanding the current usage of assets, including talent, and what is needed to achieve growth goals enables organizations to understand the gap and develop plans to build capacity over time.



Align Acuity Across Facilities

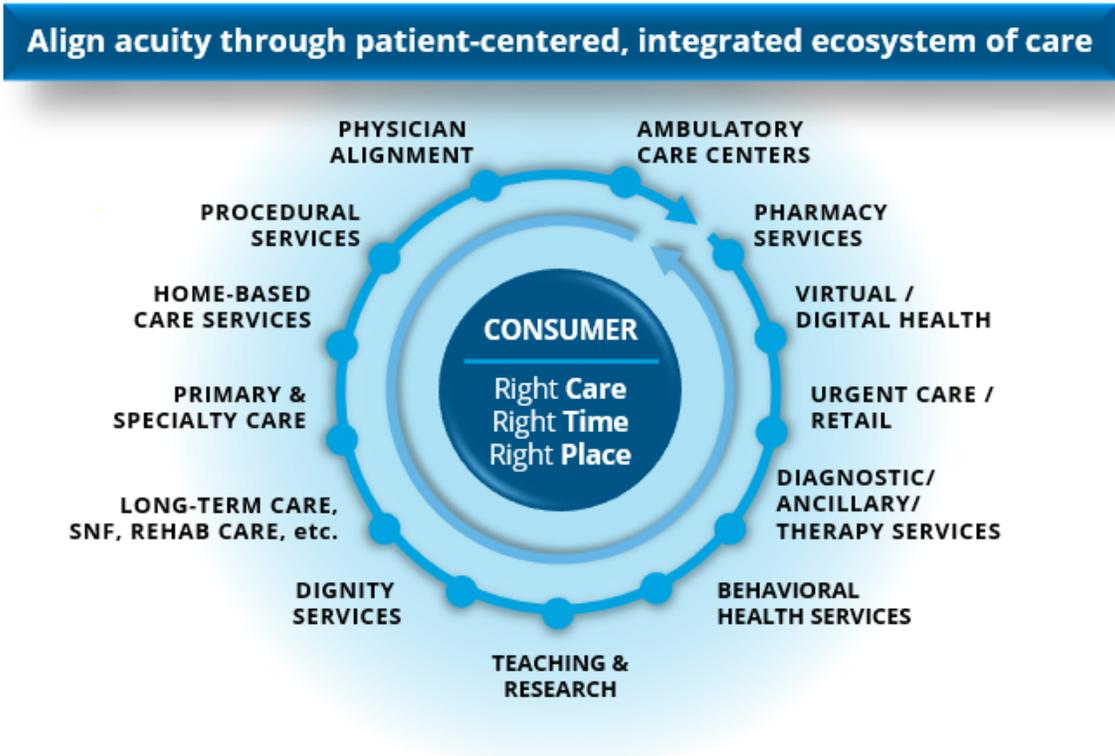
Most systems have a diverse array of ambulatory and inpatient services, varying patient case mixes across locations, and unique operational characteristics within their networks. Maximizing specialized care at tertiary facilities while enhancing community hospital usage is essential to balancing patient needs across available resources and efficiently providing care at an enterprise level. Creating centers of excellence to utilize specialized care teams and centralize higher acuity patients is one strategy to align to the clinical condition and acuity of patients.

Designing a decision framework for directing patients and routing transfers, coupled with care coordination, allows systems to orchestrate care across enterprise resources to enhance the right care at the right place, calibrating enterprise structure with patient acuity. This approach preserves centers of excellence for patients requiring specialized services, and balances other services such as outpatient, home care, and other sites of care to support care delivery at the most appropriate site, resources and acuity. By matching patient needs to resources, systems free up beds for patients who need higher acuity care while increasing utilization of community facilities.

Redesign Care Management and Utilization Management

Care management and utilization management are key functions to achieve optimal patient flow and payment through enhanced care progression, timely discharges, and appropriate reimbursement. Having a strong operating model, right-sized staffing, and efficient workflows enabled by the right data and technology enablers are fundamental components to patient flow, length of stay (LOS) management, and capacity optimization. Enhancing these functions includes:

- Standardizing the roles of nurse case manager, social workers, and administration staff across facilities
- Right-sizing staff to provide coverage to match patient demand and needs
- Designing efficient workflows powered by technology, data-driven decisions, and AI.
- Creating a culture of the patient where throughput is everyone's responsibility including proactive patient and family engagement



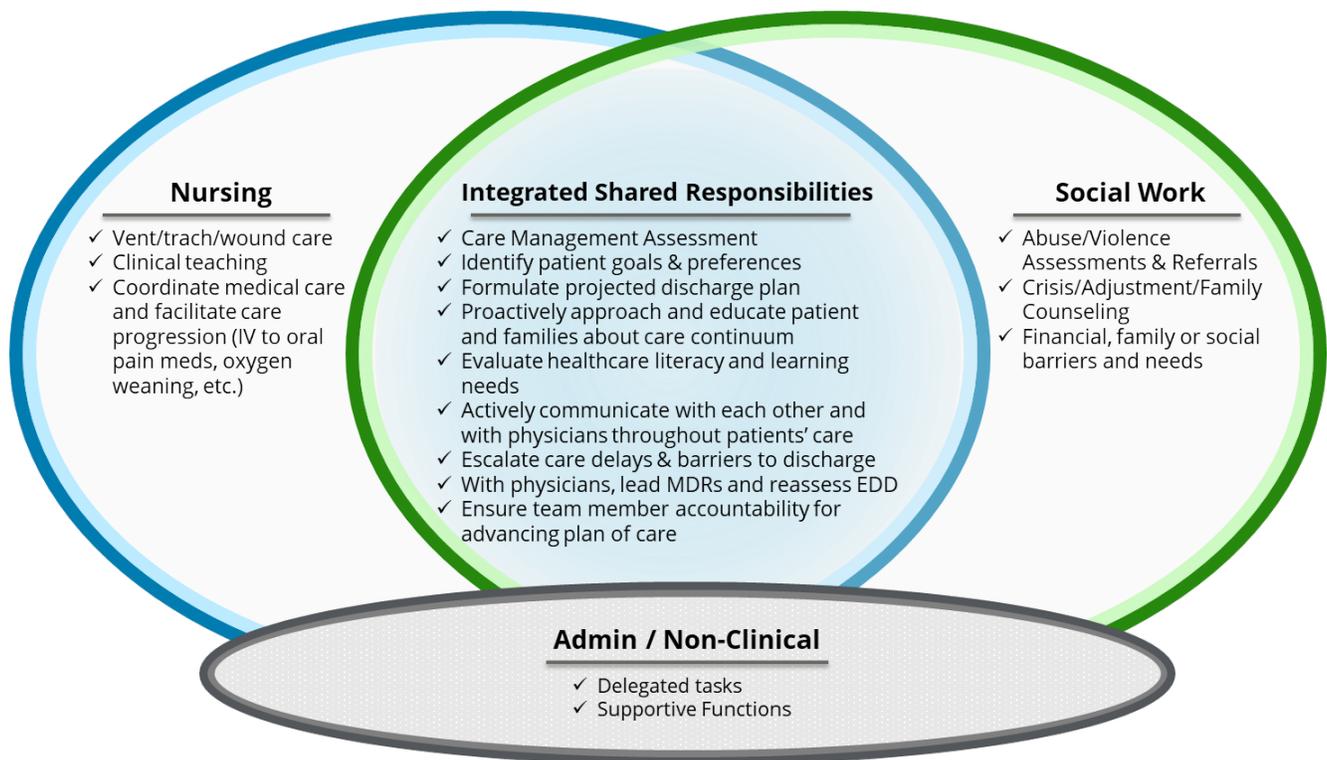
Source: Deloitte Clinical Solutions

Decompress the Emergency Department

Healthcare systems must have effective approaches to managing patient volumes in the Emergency Department (ED) as it serves as the first point of entry for many patients, often experiencing significant congestion, delaying needed care for urgent cases, and increasing the risks of patients leaving before being seen. To ease congestion and decompress backlogs, hospitals need a strong care management and utilization management function to identify and support next steps in care progression, whether admission or discharge, and review level of care guidelines to prevent payment denials.

Effective strategies include:

- Consistent and proactive management of care progression and discharge plans
- Clear roles and adequate CM and UM coverage matching resource availability to patient volume at key decision points
- Strong support protocols and efficient processes, including escalation pathways, observation management practices, transfer decisioning, and patient statusing
- Clear communication pathways and decision frameworks to align acuity and patient needs with the best placement and care plan



Source: Deloitte Clinical Solutions

Centralize Management of Patient Flow

To orchestrate patient flow across all the assets at an enterprise level, healthcare systems need visibility into real-time data, current and near-term patient needs, capacity, and resource availability to optimize care progression and delivery. This function may range from bed management in a single facility to a transfer center at a system level or command center with visibility across surgery, inpatient beds, ICUs, EDs, and ancillary assets. With a centralized view of patient demand and operations, organizations are enabled with real-time decision-making and resource management with a holistic view of system capacity.

At the core of any patient flow management structure is the ability to view resource capacity in real-time to enable efficient and accurate decision making as patients enter and exit from their care delivery. The first step is accurate data, including operating hours, resource availability, estimated discharge dates when applicable, and real-time visibility into patient locations. Once these critical components are ready, systems can turn this data into a knowledge center to support decision making, identify throughput barriers, predict availability, and assist in load balancing across the enterprise, steering patients to the right site of service, with the right resources at the right time.

Our Perspective

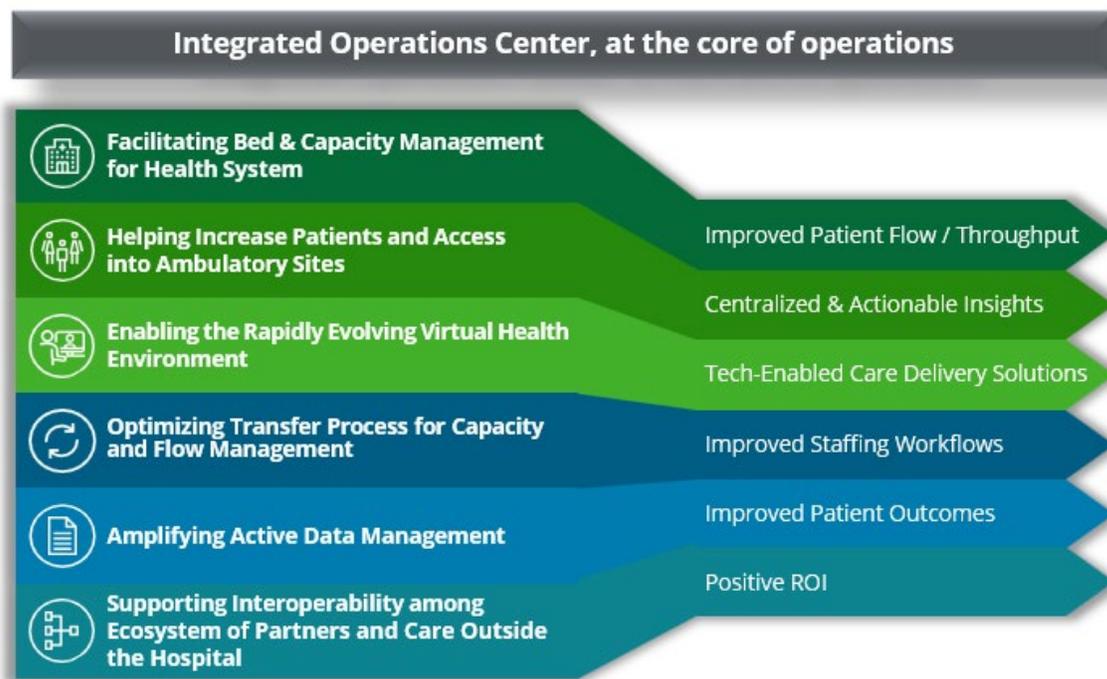
Optimizing assets for strategic growth enablement and capacity management is essential for healthcare organizations striving to balance financial sustainability with quality care delivery.

Deloitte brings deep experience in addressing these complexities, meeting organizations wherever they are in their capacity management. We have a proven track record working with a variety of organizations to identify and realize opportunities to achieve long-term growth and margin goals including:

- **Large Urban Academic Medical Center:** Developed a long-term financial plan to unlock capacity, created a center of excellence, and orchestrated patient flow for a net savings of \$80+M

- **30+ Multi-State System:** Unlocked capacity for strategic service line growth through optimal use of existing resources for an additional 4,000 admissions and net contribution margin of \$25+M
- **Regional Community Health System:** Transformed organizational culture, operating model, and technology to improve patient flow and efficient utilization of services for a savings of \$17+M

Whether the challenge is suboptimized infrastructure, care progression bottlenecks, or workforce shortages limiting capacity, our approach focuses on unlocking process efficiencies, aligning patient acuity to the right setting, and enhancing care management and utilization management strategies.



Source: Deloitte Clinical Solutions

Meet the team

If you would like to learn more about the strategies discussed in this article, please reach out to:



Chandrika Divi
cdivi@deloitte.com



Oliver Chu
ochu@deloitte.com



Marya Upchurch
mupchurch@deloitte.com



Sako Maki-Thompson
smakithompson@deloitte.com

Deloitte.

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, a UK private company limited by guarantee (“DTTL”), its network of member firms, and their related entities. DTTL and each of its member firms are legally separate and independent entities. DTTL (also referred to as “Deloitte Global”) does not provide services to clients. In the United States, Deloitte refers to one or more of the US member firms of DTTL, their related entities that operate using the “Deloitte” name in the United States and their respective affiliates. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting. Please see www.deloitte.com/about to learn more about our global network of member firms.

Deloitte provides industry-leading audit and assurance, tax and legal, consulting, financial advisory, and risk advisory services to nearly 90% of the Fortune Global 500® and thousands of private companies. Our people deliver measurable and lasting results that help reinforce public trust in capital markets, enable clients to transform and thrive, and lead the way toward a stronger economy, a more equitable society, and a sustainable world. Building on its 175-plus year history, Deloitte spans more than 150 countries and territories. Learn how Deloitte’s approximately 457,000 people worldwide make an impact that matters at www.deloitte.com.

This communication contains general information only, and none of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited (DTTL), its global network of member firms or their related entities (collectively, the “Deloitte organization”) is, by means of this communication, rendering professional advice or services. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your finances or your business, you should consult a qualified professional adviser.

No representations, warranties or undertakings (express or implied) are given as to the accuracy or completeness of the information in this communication, and none of DTTL, its member firms, related entities, employees or agents shall be liable or responsible for any loss or damage whatsoever arising directly or indirectly in connection with any person relying on this communication. DTTL and each of its member firms, and their related entities, are legally separate and independent entities.

Copyright © 2025 Deloitte Development LLC. All rights reserved.

