SAEM 2026 · CLINICAL OPERATIONS

Turning Clicks into Competition: Incentivizing Consult Documentation to Optimize Patient Throughput

Zoe Kitchings, Jackson Agraz, Timothy Layng, Sarah Wendel

Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia

+12.4 pp

CONSULT DOCUMENTATION COMPLIANCE DURING GAMIFIED PERIODS

56.2% vs 43.8% · $\chi^2 = 384$ · $p < 0.001$

38,487

DOCUMENTED CONSULTS ACROSS STUDY PERIOD

Mar 2024 – Nov 2025

61.1 → 66.3

% MILESTONE DOCUMENTATION BY QUARTER

$\chi^2 = 96.1$, $df = 6$, $P < .001$ · independent of gamification

−34 min

ED LOS DURING GAMIFICATION

676 vs 710 min · $F(1, 74{,}597) = 6.53$, $P = .011$

BACKGROUND

Consult delays drive disposition delays.

Emergency department (ED) patients frequently experience delays in disposition due to long wait times from consulting services.

Although electronic health record (EHR)-based consult tracking can improve transparency, sustained clinician engagement with documentation remains challenging.

In December 2023, the University of Virginia ED implemented an EHR-integrated consult tracking tool paired with periodic gamified documentation incentives.

This study evaluated the effect of gamification on documentation compliance and downstream patient flow metrics.

METHODS

Retrospective observational, gamified vs non-gamified comparison.

Design. Retrospective observational study of ED consultations from March 2024 through November 2025.

Documented milestones. Acknowledgment, bedside evaluation, communication of final recommendations.

Comparison. Periods of active gamified documentation incentives vs periods without incentives.

Primary outcome. Consult documentation compliance.

Secondary outcomes. ED length of stay (LOS) · time intervals between consultation events.

Analysis. Chi-squared tests · analysis of variance.

RESULTS

Higher compliance, modest LOS gain, durable improvement.

38,487	Consults documented after completed recommendations
56.2% / 43.8%	Compliance during gamification vs without *($\chi^2 = 384$, $df = 1$, $P < .001$)*
+12.4 pp	Net compliance gain during gamified periods
61.1 → 66.3 %	Milestone documentation across quarters *($\chi^2 = 96.1$, $df = 6$, $P < .001$)*
676 / 710 min	Mean ED LOS · gamified vs non-gamified
F = 6.53	ED LOS comparison *($F(1, 74{,}597)$, $P = .011$)*
Independent	Quarterly improvement durable, independent of gamification status

CONCLUSION

Low-budget, behaviorally informed incentives meaningfully enhance engagement.

Gamification of consultation documentation was associated with substantial improvement in documentation compliance and modest reductions in ED LOS. Baseline improvement in documentation over time, independent of active gamification, suggests incentive-based initiatives may drive durable behavior change. These findings indicate that low-budget, behaviorally informed incentives can meaningfully enhance engagement with operational initiatives. Pairing gamification with existing consult tracking infrastructure reflects a scalable strategy to improve ED throughput.

ASK ME ABOUT

- Gamification structure
- EHR consult tracking design
- Durable behavior change
- Scalable replication