

# The Intractable Problem of Health Care Crowding: How Waiting Room Crowding Influences Subsequent Patient Experiences

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# **The Intractable Problem of Health Care Crowding:**

## **How Waiting Room Crowding Influences Subsequent Patient Experiences**

### **Abstract:**

In many countries, crowded waiting rooms are the norm rather than the exception. Prior research indicates various adverse effects related to them. However, the effects of crowded waiting rooms on the core service experience remain underexplored in current literature, even though it is a critical part of the patient experience. Using an experimental approach, our findings reveal that crowding-induced stress spills over to the treatment room increasing patients' perception of health risk. Furthermore, we find that attributing control over the waiting room environment to physicians mitigates patients' stress. We suggest that this effect can be explained by coping theory, where controllability attribution functions as a form of cognitive restructuring. Practical implications include targeted communication to promote this coping process, which could reduce the negative effects of crowding in healthcare and other domains.

*Keywords: Healthcare, Crowding, Patient Experience*

*Track: Public Sector and Non-Profit Marketing*