



TIME : STUDY

Make every minute count.



Introduction to Time Studies in Healthcare Services

Ten-Minute Learning Series, Vol. 1



About the Ten-Minute Learning Series

We know your time is valuable. Our Ten-Minute Learning Series is designed to help you learn more about time studies and how to make them impactful in your organization. Each article is packed with information that you can read quickly. With a small investment of time, we aim to enhance your understanding of administering and improving time studies.

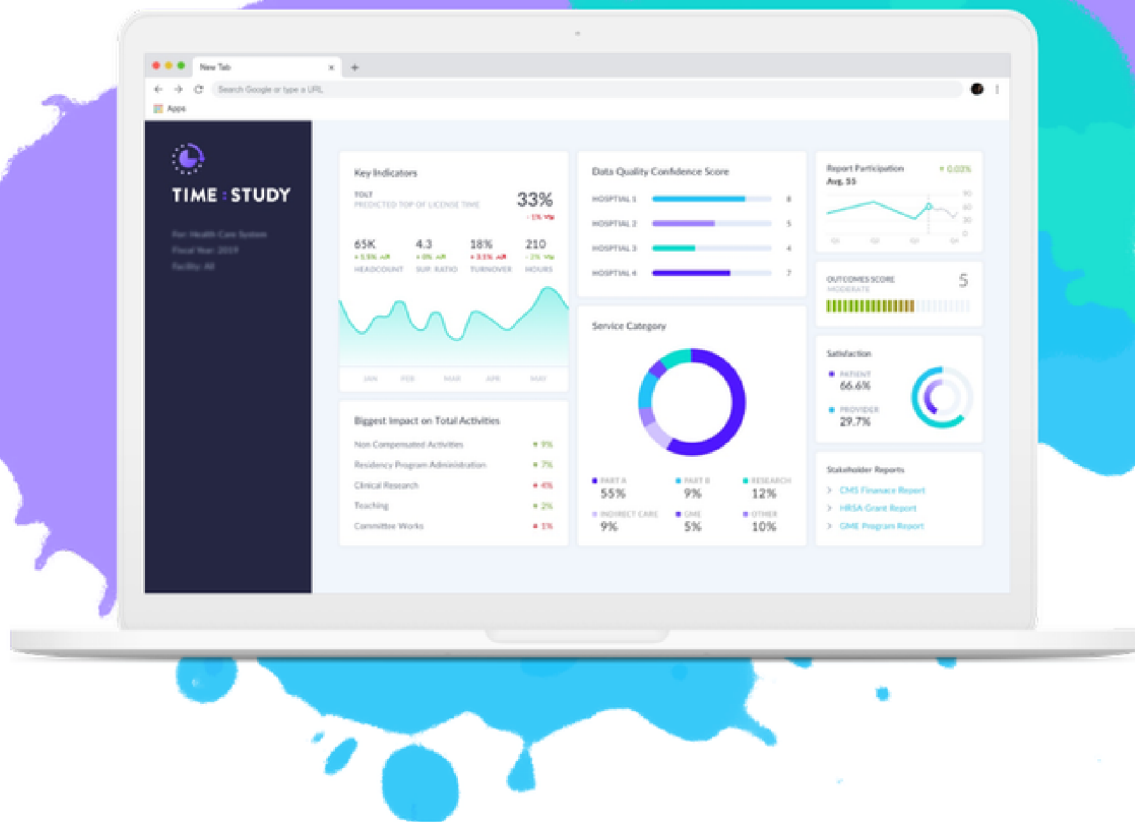
If you have a topic that would be interesting for us to cover, please let us know at resources@timestudy.com.

About Time Study Inc.

Time Study is the first platform designed from the ground up to focus on the critical process of administering time studies in healthcare organizations. Our user-friendly software transforms time studies into an efficient, accurate, and insightful process. Health service organizations are able to prepare accurate financial reports in a fraction of the time while getting new insights that drive productivity and best practices. Meanwhile, practitioners can track in real-time for much greater accuracy and compliance.

Top hospitals around the country use Time Study to make the hospital work more efficiently and give staff a more rewarding experience on the job to guide them towards best practices that ultimately deliver better care to the patients.

To learn more, visit www.timestudy.com.



Introduction to Time Studies in Healthcare Services

As the old saying from Peter Drucker goes, “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” We tend to focus on money as the “it” because money, both income and spending, is imminently measurable. (That’s the entire reason the accounting profession exists!)

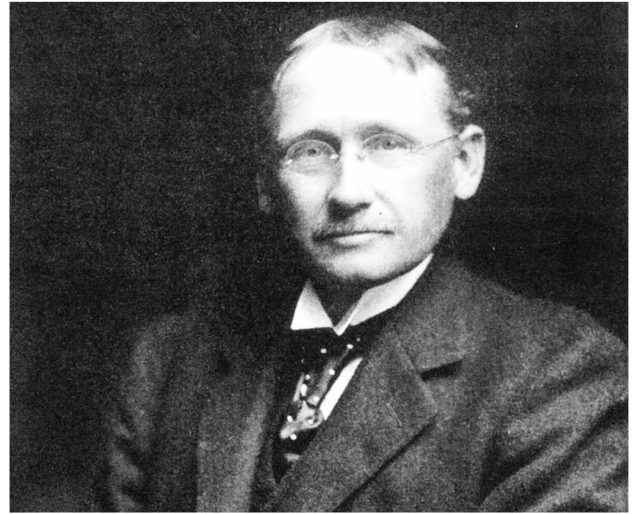
When time becomes the “it” of interest, measurement and therefore management become much more complex and nuanced. That’s where time studies come in. Although time studies are used in all manner of workplaces ranging from law firms to factory floors, we are going to focus on how they are used in healthcare services.

In healthcare services, time studies have a significant role that can help practitioners work more efficiently, improve revenue, track compliance, and help practitioners work on what they find most rewarding, i.e. time spent at their highest skill set. Within healthcare services, if we can help these practitioners work at what they do best for as much time as possible each workday, they can contribute to an improved overall level of care and experience greater reward in their workday so they won’t burn out in such a demanding environment.

Brief History of Time Studies

If you're new to time studies, here is some background on how they came to be for context. Let's take a moment to look back at their history.

Time studies date back to the late 1800s when Frederick Winslow Taylor, an American engineer, became one of the first known management consultants. He invented the concept of "scientific management" that applied scientific study to workflows. (In honor of his pioneering methods, this has also been referred to as "**Taylorism**.")¹



Frederick Winslow Taylor

Taylor's methods were a byproduct of the Industrial Age when work was operating at scale and the labor economy was growing rapidly. It is easy to imagine how it was initially applied, which is on the factory floor where both time and motion were **measured**.² Time-motion studies transformed industrial labor by breaking down the work into discrete tasks and batching them. Hence, workers focused on similar tasks and minimized the effort and movement to do **them**.³

In more modern times, time studies were used to inform quality assurance (QA), as well as measure sports performance, code time for software developers, and how sales teams allocate their time.

Turning to our area of interest of healthcare services, time studies are used to track how a practitioner spends their time during their workday. In fact, in a recent **study**,⁴ the outcomes of this work dramatically increased the amount of direct patient care nurses spent during their workday. Before time studies, nurses were spending about 35 percent of their time with patients.

After time studies and the implementation of new workflows, time nurses spent at the bedside caring for patients went from 35 to 78 percent. Introducing a better visitation sequence for serving patients also reduced the frequency of call lights and improved patient satisfaction.⁵



How Time Studies Are Used in Healthcare Services

The practice of measuring time efficiency is widespread within hospitals, care facilities, administrative offices, teaching environments, and even in public education facilities that provide healthcare services.

Time studies are used to record and study how practitioner time is spent at work using a momentary, daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly sample. The data is used to identify the percent of the time a practitioner spends in areas that are reimbursable by CMS for their fiscal year cost report. This data also supports a variety of operational requirements in an organization such as evidence to support practitioners who met their allocation agreement or grant contract requirements. We also can't forget the use of this data to identify strategies for workflow management and resource allocation.

Diving deeper, here are examples of the areas of time collected for these use cases:

Medicare Organ Transplant Reimbursement

Organ transplant has revolutionized patient outcomes, but they are huge and expensive undertakings. The percent of working activities a practitioner spends in reimbursable areas of time by organ type, and further complicated by the number of transplants that occurred in the facility, are captured through time studies.

NIH Research Grants

The National Institute of Health requires documentation for research grants to demonstrate how staff time is allocated against the goals and objectives of the grant.

Graduate Medical Education (GME) Funding

Graduate Medical Education refers to any type of formal medical education, usually, hospital-sponsored or hospital-based training, pursued after receipt of the M.D. or D.O. degree (residency) or sub-specialty (fellowship). Time studies track how the student is allocating their time in order to demonstrate that they are accumulating sufficient hours in the areas necessary to earn their certification. On the opposing side, they track the time spent by a practitioner leading medical educational activities for reimbursement purposes.

School-Based Services Medicaid Reimbursement

Health services rendered to Medicaid-eligible participants in a school-based system or public health entity and include the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefits. Time studies track these services as working activities for on-site employees for reimbursement by CMS.

Operational Efficiency Management

Time studies are used both in care settings as well as in the back-office to measure how staff allocates their time through their workday. The goal is to identify places where workers are wasting or duplicating effort, or spending time in ways that could be delegated to others.



Better management can increase productivity, revenue, job satisfaction, and the quality of patient care.

These uses of time studies are subject to audit and must be recorded with precision, attestation, and in some cases, supporting documentation. Auditors will look at the accuracy of the calculations through the recorded data.

Types of Time Studies



The purpose of time studies is to accurately measure how much time a person spends each day doing certain activities.

Time studies can be conducted in various ways depending on the specificity of the data needed, the intention of the study, and regulations and guidance set by payers and other external agencies.. Following are the three most commonly used types in healthcare settings:

1

Periodic Time Study

The most frequently used are periodic time studies where a practitioner measures in detail how they spend their time at work for a set amount of time. These can be for a day, week, or longer, but weekly studies are the most common. The staff member will log what they were doing and for how long as they go about their day. Often these are self-reported and the staff member must attest to their accuracy.

2

Random Moment Time Study (RMTS)

A Random Moment Time Study (RMTS) is when a staff member is queried at a moment in time and they report what they are doing at that specific time. By releasing these moments using statistically significant principles these snapshots can paint an accurate picture of how practitioners spend their time and the greater organization as a whole.

3

Time and Motion Study

A time and motion study is an observational technique in which a third party follows a staff member and records their time. In certain instances, they will use a stopwatch or time and motion software to precisely measure each task's time allocation. Due to the number of resources needed to conduct them, these are used infrequently.

Key Benefits of Time Studies

So why use time studies and what are their benefits? The answers are varied depending on the type of institution conducting them. For some, it may be a reporting requirement; for others, they seek to enhance the workplace experience for staff and those receiving services. Some of the benefits are as follows:



Workforce Efficiency

The entire purpose of time studies is to help understand how staff resources are being deployed and where they are spending their time. By having a clear and measurable accounting, only then can management make informed decisions.



Staff Satisfaction and Burnout Prevention

Time studies can expose heretofore unknown administrative processes and inefficiencies that prevent staff members from working at their highest skill set, a place of high reward. It can also help defend against burnout by understanding the true amount of time consumed by different levels of skilled work.



Financial Performance

Many entities that provide healthcare services are leaving money on the table due to missed CMS reimbursement. Having complete and timely reporting can improve your reimbursement numbers and just as significantly, will result in reimbursement accuracy; therefore, safeguarding against costly audits.



Better Compliance

A healthy system for administering time studies ensures that staff understands their importance and how their participation benefits the organization. The result is a more defensible process when audited with improved data accuracy.

These are but a few ways that time studies benefit enterprises that value their greatest resource, practitioner time.

Works Cited

¹ Henshall, Adam, **Taylorism and the History of Processes**, Process Street, April 9, 2018.

² Salvendy, Ph.D., Gavriel, Handbook of Industrial Engineering, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., May 11, 2001, Section IV C, Chapter 54.

³ Krenn, M. (2011). **From Scientific Management to Homemaking: Lillian M. Gilbreth's Contributions to the Development of Management Thought, Management & Organizational History**, 6(2), 145 –161

⁴ Virginia Mason Institute, **Nursing Team Extends Care at the Bedside**, March 24, 2015.

⁵ **Ibid**