

S2 - Additional details on the study setting

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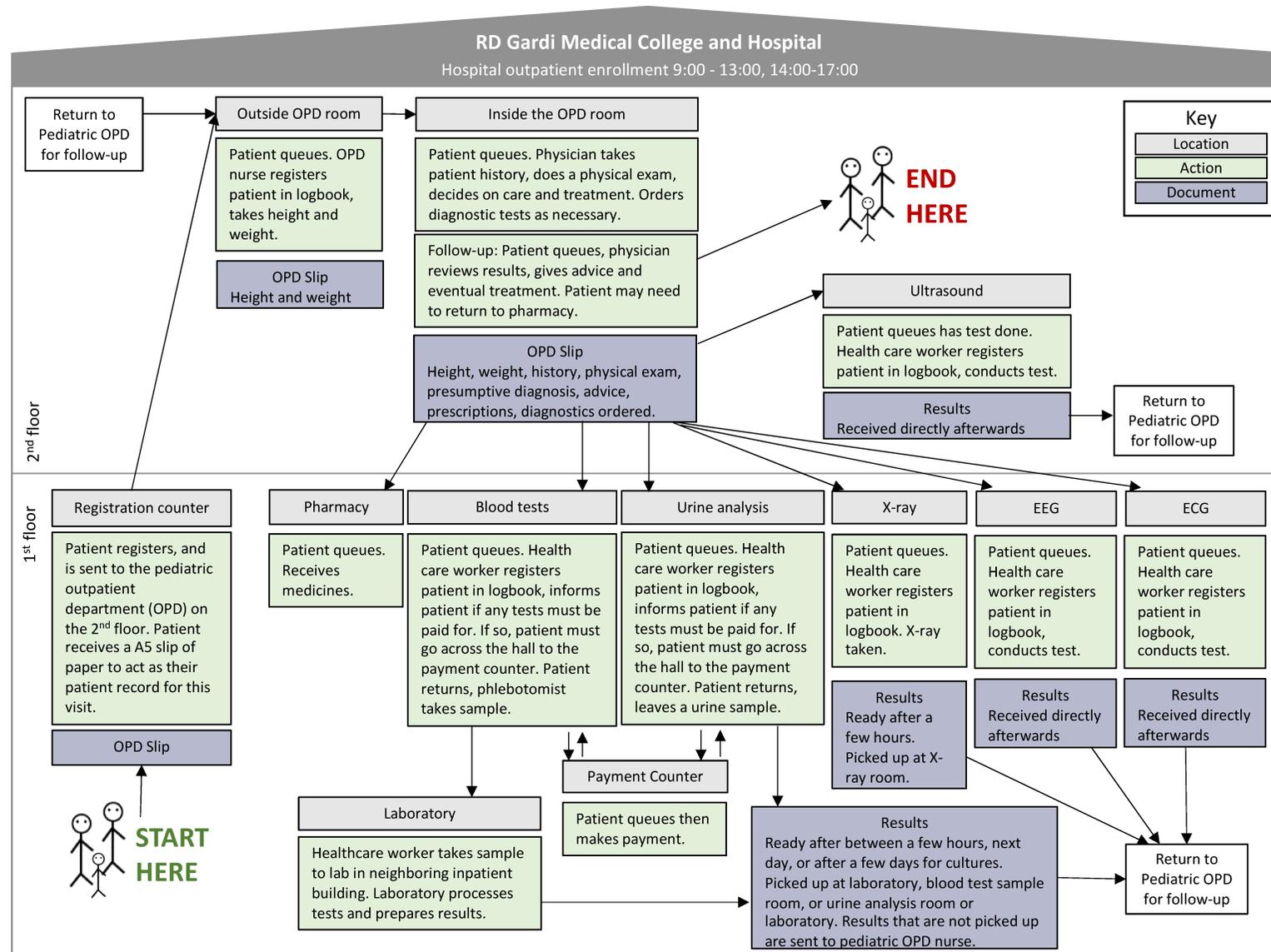


Figure 1: Patient flow through the paediatric outpatient department

Unstructured observational findings on the study setting

India has a pluralistic healthcare system comprised of governmental healthcare facilities, private clinics, teaching hospitals, and informal providers. The quality, cost, and convenience of healthcare services vary between the different options. Choice of where to seek care is dependent on a patient's needs and available resources. It is common that patients combine multiple providers during the course of a single illness.

RD Gardi Medical College is located approximately five kilometres outside the urban centre of Ujjain, a semi-rural city with about 500,000 inhabitants. At the outpatient department (OPD), approximately 48 patients are seen per day, about nine of which present with fever. Patients arrive to the outpatient department steadily throughout the day, but the mornings are slightly busier than the afternoons. No patient records are kept on file, however logbooks registering patient name and date are kept at each point of care. Each patient receives an A5 piece of paper from the outpatient department called "OPD slip" which has all the relevant information for the patient visit (see Figure 1). The OPD slip, test results and any other documents relevant to the visit are given to the patient or caregiver to take home. During consultation, caregivers frequently bring with them patient records from previous visits to RD Gardi or from visits to other healthcare providers.

When patients first enter the hospital, they must queue at the registration desk. From there they are sent to the appropriate department, in this case paediatrics, where they must again queue for their turn. For each test a physician prescribes, caregivers go to that testing room, queue, register for the test, then are informed if there is a charge for the test and if necessary, proceed to the payment counter at the hospital entrance to pay and return, then have the sample taken or the test conducted. Caregivers are then responsible to collect the test reports from the individual testing rooms and then return to the outpatient department for follow-up. If time permits, they can show the reports to the physician on the same day, otherwise they are advised to return with their child for follow-up on the next day which the physician they have seen for initial consultation is scheduled to attend the clinic, after approximately three or four days. See above Figure 1: Patient flow through the paediatric outpatient department.

Patient consultations, symptomatic therapy, such as cough syrup and paracetamol, is available free of charge at the hospital pharmacy along with selected other medicines for the treatment of common childhood illnesses, e.g. antibiotics and anthelmintics. Sometimes doctors prescribe medicines which are not on the hospital formulary and those medicines are paid for out of pocket. Regardless if patients receive a prescription, almost any medicine can be obtained from a private pharmacy or drug retailer outside of the hospital.