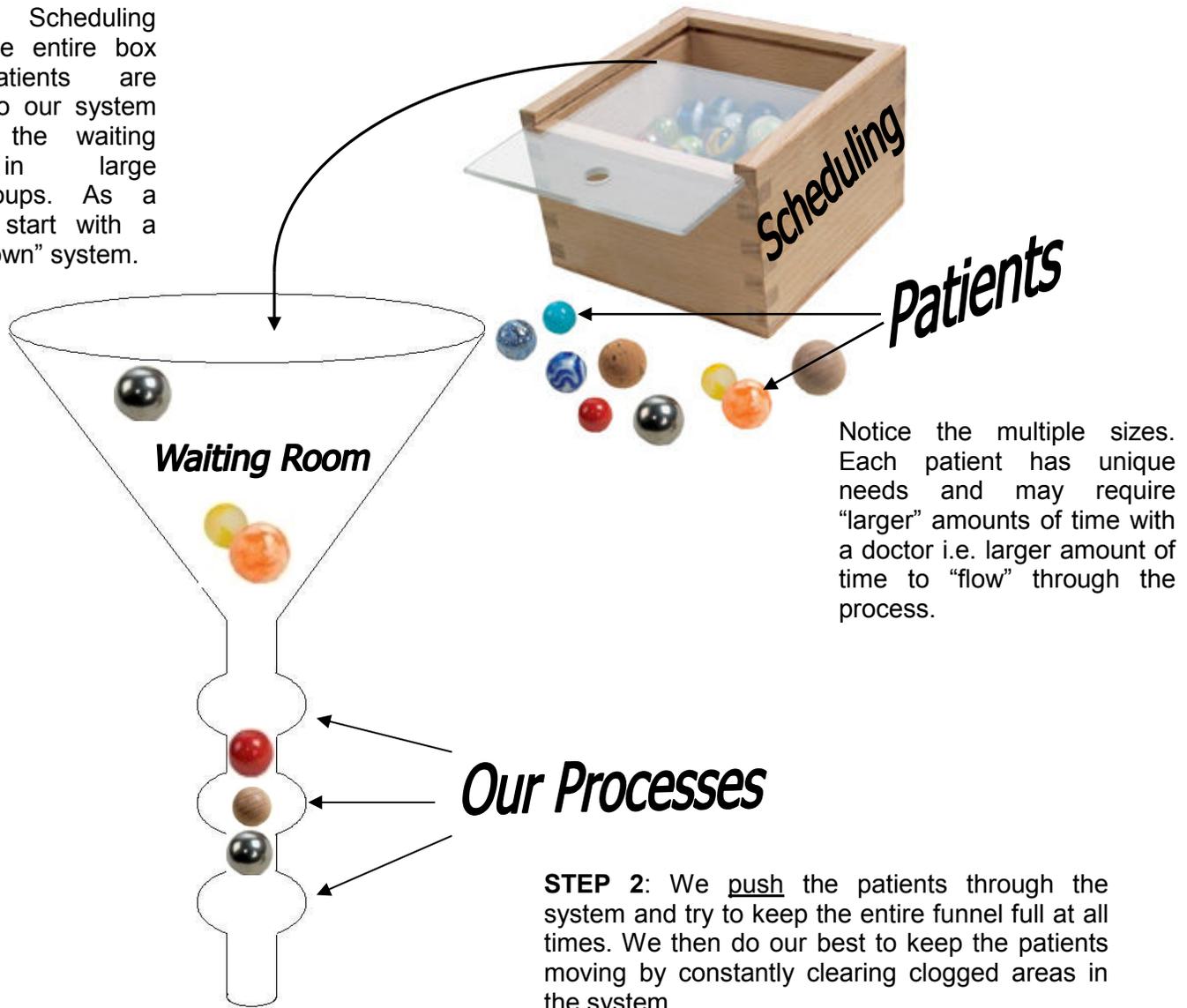


Description of our Traditional Healthcare Process

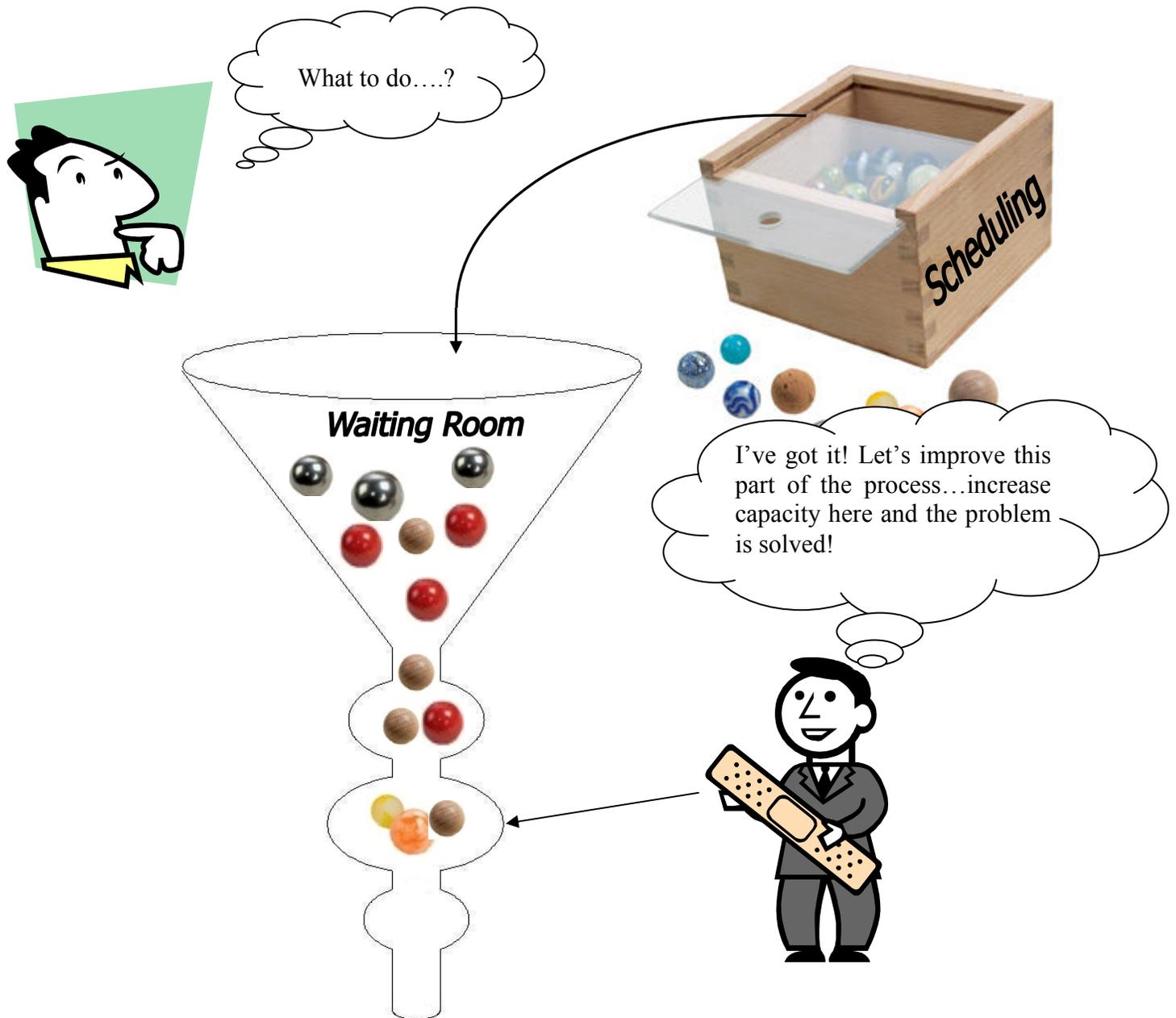
STEP 1: Scheduling empties the entire box here. Patients are pushed into our system and into the waiting room in large batches/groups. As a result we start with a “bogged-down” system.



STEP 2: We push the patients through the system and try to keep the entire funnel full at all times. We then do our best to keep the patients moving by constantly clearing clogged areas in the system.

RESULTS: Unsteady flow. When a section of the funnel becomes jammed and we unplug the system our throughput worsens. Common mindset is that dumping a large number of patients into the first step of the process ensures less downtime and increased profits. This approach is deceiving. This system is sporadic at best. Efforts outweigh incoming cash flow. We limit the potential of our system. Patients “stuck” in-process become aggravated. Patients waiting in queue become aggravated. Patients may not receive the attention they need because too much effort is expended trying to keep the system flowing. We lose our marbles! Restricted throughput equals restricted profits as well as patient dissatisfaction.

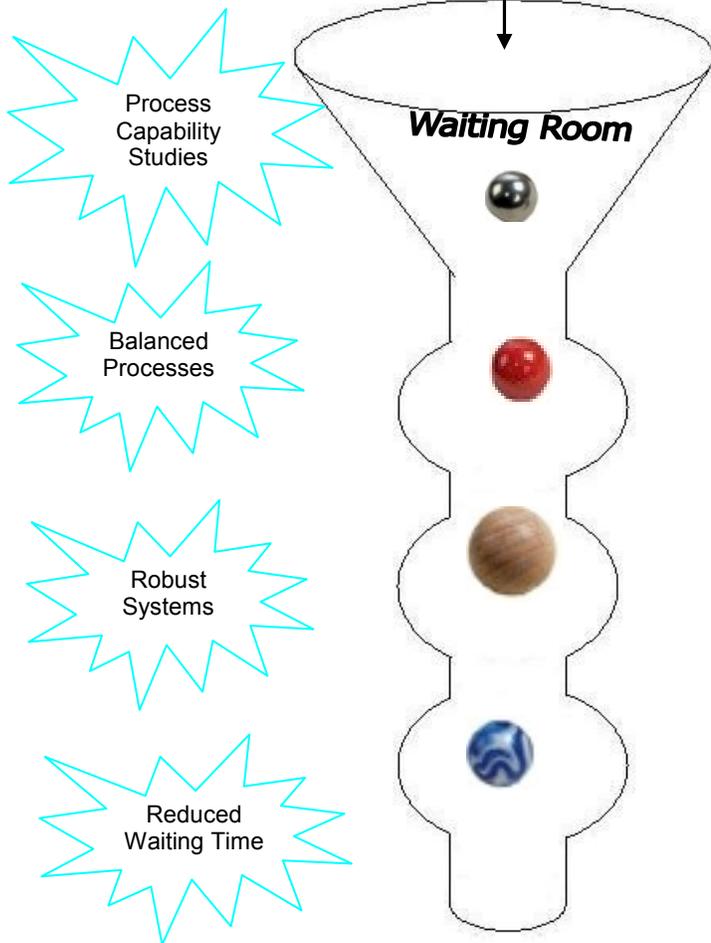
Ineffective Solutions: Band Aid Fixes



RESULTS: The problem is moved; not removed. The flow is even more uneven when we optimize individual parts of a system. The potential for bogging down the system has actually increased. Throughput worsens. Profits are decreased because we have invested time and money on an ineffective solution. The patient's healthcare experience is unchanged. Staff members become discouraged due to more frequent problems in flow. Talent is still wasted on maintaining a difficult system rather than on patient care.

Establishing a Lean Healthcare System

Optimize the system as a whole based strictly on patient needs! Let's use "band aids" on our patients, not our processes.



How does it work? In a lean system, all of our processes are synchronized to the best of our ability. Everything is based on patient needs. In a perfect system we serve one patient, move one patient, and bring in the next patient with all waiting eliminated. We design "robust" systems, meaning that our processes are capable of producing consistent results even with a great deal of variation in inputs.

Is this possible? It is a steep goal. Even if we never fully achieve this goal we should constantly strive for it. That is what "lean thinking" is all about. Every step toward that goal improves profitability and patient satisfaction.

Where do we begin? Patient care is always our top priority. Therefore we eliminate all unnecessary steps that add no value for the patient. For example, does waiting add value for the patient? Can we improve our paperwork and registration process? These are all questions we must consider, but what more can we do?

Balance the entire system. The process of optimizing the system begins with scheduling. We take into account the purpose of the patient visit. How long will the procedure take? We then schedule accordingly in an attempt to have a new patient enter the system at precisely the exact time that the previous patient has been served. Patient demand becomes the heartbeat of our facility.

Will this limit how many patients we can serve each day? Actually, you will be able to serve more patients because your entire staff will be spending less time trying to unclog the system. You will have more time to focus on patient care and little by little you will be able to serve more patients without increased effort on your part.

RESULTS: By optimizing the entire system based on patient needs and demand you can establish flow. As such your throughput continues to improve. As throughput improves so do profits. Effort required to maintain the system decreases and more effort can be directed toward better serving patients and establishing continuous improvement projects. It all begins with a change in mindset and culture. This shift, although difficult, produces outstanding results. Imagine increasing productivity by 100%, improving throughput by 90%, improving quality by 85%, and improving workspace utilization by 40%. These seemingly impossible improvements are the "average" results of lean implementation.