The figure below shows patient flow for an emergency department, based on arrivals, patient volume, and arrival by hour of the day. In fact, this is the graph of the patient arrival activity in any emergency department in the United States. The actual number of patients per hour may vary, but the curve is the same.

Leaders can begin to forecast patient flow from such data, but once they have the data, they can take it a step further. Leaders can similarly track hourly census in the emergency department, not only the number of arrivals but the number of patients actually in their department at particular times. A further step is plotting the demand for lab and radiology services. Compile these types of data to forecast patient flow with a high degree of accuracy.

Figure 2.2: Patient Flow in an Emergency Department