This figure demonstrates what happens when physician service capacity does not match patient demand in an emergency department with about 25,000 annual visits.

In the very early morning hours, there is sufficient physician capacity. There is a sharp and consistent rise in patient arrivals shortly before 7 a.m. to noon, leaving the department understaffed to meet demand during that morning period. Through early afternoon, staffing is about right, but then comes another jump in patient arrivals, presenting demand the physician staffing can’t match or handle. The patient demand and load is predictable. The hospital scheduled the mismatch.