

Streamlining Processes For Initial Clinical Assessments: Enhancing Efficiency In An Integrated Home Health and Home Hospice Service Methodist Welfare Services

Shi Yun Melissa FONG, Yan Chew CHONG, Xing Li Cindy SEE,
Sin Yee Violet LEONG, Annie THEN, Bin Xuan Andy LEE

Introduction/Background

To provide a seamless suite of services that is able to meet the needs of homebound patients, Methodist Welfare Services (MWS) integrated its general home health and home palliative care services into one entity known as Home Care and Home Hospice (HCHH).

However, the integration also brought about process duplication, lengthened clinical and admission processes - adding on to the team's burden. It was estimated that at least 23% of HCHH staff nurses took more than 2 hours (hrs) to complete a home health initial clinical assessment which included a Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment (CGA) and about 30% of HCHH nurses took more than 2 hrs to complete a Palliative Care Initial Assessment (PCIA) for home palliative care admissions.

To address inefficiencies and reduce staff dissatisfaction due to laborious documentation and lengthy clinical processes, MWS HCHH embarked on an initiative to improve the team's productivity for this process.

Goal/Objective

1. Improve efficiency by reducing or automating the number of tasks to be done by clinical team upon a patient's admission up to the completion of the first clinical assessment by 20%
2. Decrease time spent by the clinical team during initial home visits
3. Improve staff satisfaction by reducing the number of tasks to be completed

Problem Analysis

A project team comprising representatives from administration, nursing, medical and allied health departments was set up. A brainstorming session was initiated to identify tasks that were laborious. Ideas and feedback were organized using an affinity diagram:

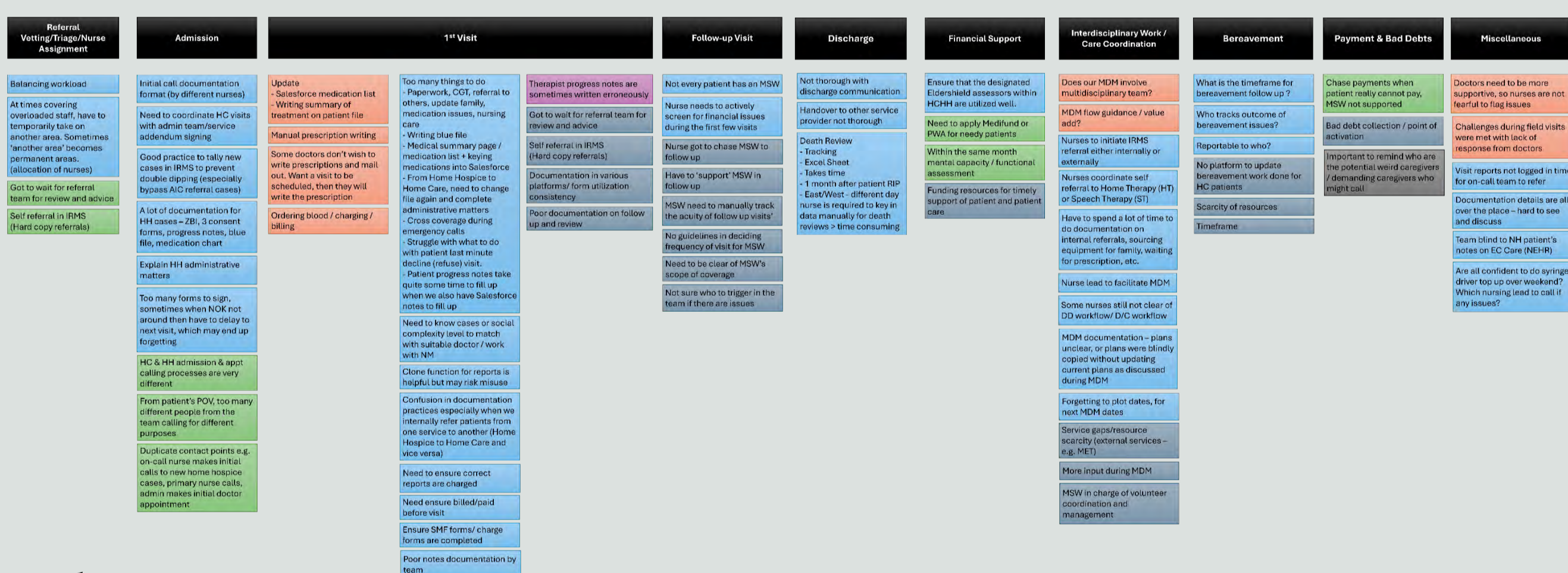


Diagram 1
Affinity diagram for brainstorming session

The 1st visit or initial assessment visit for home health and home palliative patients was identified to be complex and laborious.

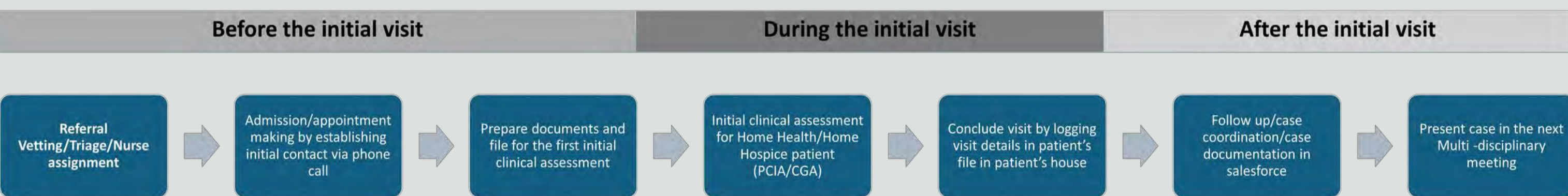


Diagram 2
Process flowchart to illustrate the initial clinical assessment process for PCIA/CGA

The Eisenhower Matrix was used to prioritize tasks and solutions:

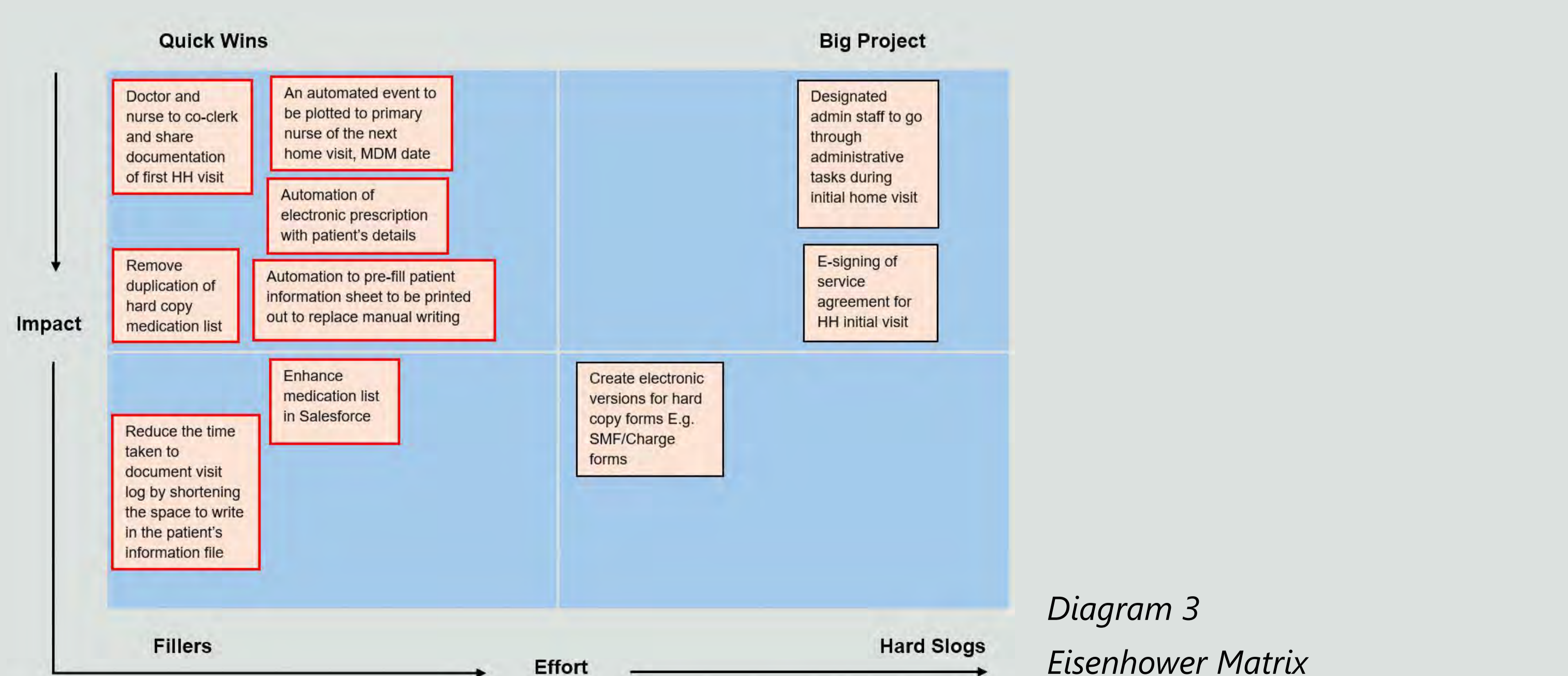


Diagram 3
Eisenhower Matrix
Project Poster for Community Care Excellence Awards 2024
Agency for Integrated Care

Implementation Plan

1. Automate tasks and digitalise administrative forms
2. Shorten and minimise required manual hard copy documentation
3. Reduce duplication of documentation

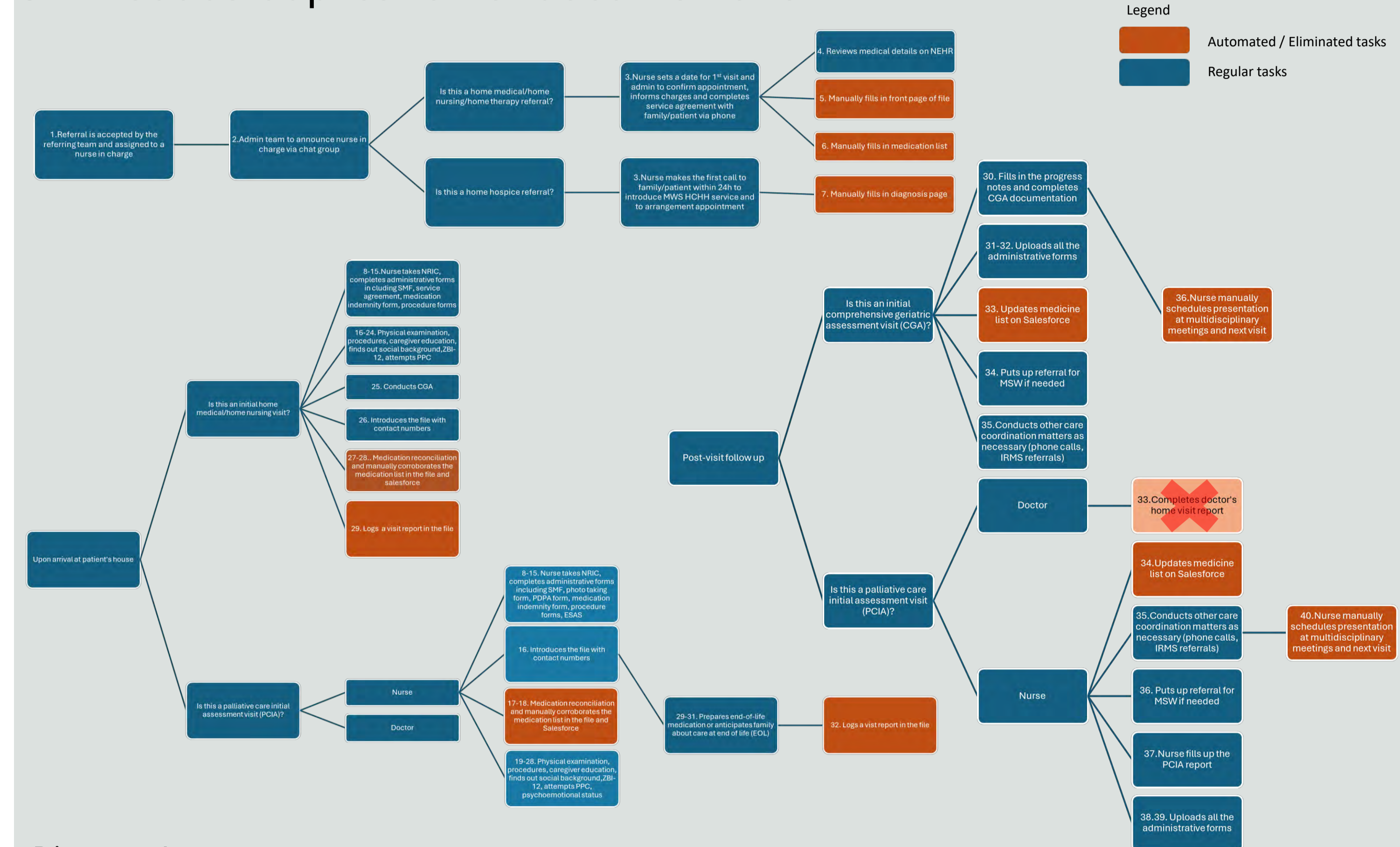


Diagram 4
Detailed flowchart of tasks needed from point of admission to end of first assessment

Benefits/Results



Initially, 25% of the nurses took over 2 hrs to complete a home health assessment; but after implementing the changes, all nurses completed it within 2 hrs, with 50% taking 1 hr or less. Similarly, PCIA completion time also improved, with all nurses taking under 2 hrs.

A post implementation survey revealed that 100% of nurses agreed that changes were effective in helping them complete work. On a scale of 1-5, 69% rated their satisfaction level at 4, indicating that they were satisfied with the improvements.

From the preparation of home visit to the formulation of an individual care plan (ICP) at the first multidisciplinary meeting, 20% of the tasks had been reduced for both home health and home palliative assessment visits.

Sustainability & Reflections

Digitalisation and automation are key resources in reducing administrative strain and improving efficiency. It was also important to continually engage the ground about the changes and review ongoing feedback.

Some of the challenges we faced included multiple rounds of clarifications and testing for each change, which led to lengthy implementation timelines. Nevertheless, the positive feedback received affirmed that we were on the right track. The next phase would be to ensure adherence to the changes, monitor for unforeseen gaps, automate and/or shorten other documentation.

Caseload is expected to increase with our ageing population. Handling an estimated 800 admissions a year, reducing the time taken for initial clinical assessment has had a huge impact on our operational efficiency. We also hope to serve as a reference for other agencies looking to implement a similar integrated approach to home care services.