

Hospitals embark on Lean Process Improvement Training to Streamline Health Care

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Health care providers from 18 hospitals across Oregon began training for Lean Yellow Belt and Green Belt certification on March 1. The meeting is the beginning of a 32 hour training program by Purdue Healthcare Advisors, a not-for-profit expert group from Purdue University, and the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems.

These hospitals have committed to send up to four participants from their clinical staff to become experts in the process improvement methodology known as Lean. Lean aims to increase value while minimizing waste. It has been used effectively in manufacturing companies for decades, particularly in Japan. Because of historically being associated with manufacturing, Lean has not typically been associated with health care until recently. However, Lean does in fact work in health care in much the same way it does in other industries: to streamline processes, reduce cost, and improve quality and timely delivery of products and services. In essence, Lean principles can be — indeed, already are being — successfully applied to the delivery of health care.

After 12 months of training, all participants will receive Yellow Belt Certification. Lean Yellow Belt training prepares health care professionals to optimize care delivery and support processes. Yellow Belts demonstrate the ability to apply evidenced-based concepts,

tools and techniques to identify non-value-adding process steps and redesign processes to overcome workflow barriers, improve quality and reliability, and reduce cost.

Each participating hospital will select one member of its team to advance to Green Belt certification. Lean Green Belt training prepares each participant to use advanced tools and methodologies, as a project team co-facilitator, to optimize care delivery and support processes in a health care setting.

All of the hospital participants will complete a project in one of the following areas:

- Adverse drug events: Harm caused by an administered drug
- Catheter-acquired urinary tract infections: Also known as CAUTI, a bacterial infection that occurs when a urinary catheter is in place
- Venous thromboembolisms (VTE): A blood clot that occurs inside a blood vessel

- Falls: Falls that occur in a hospital setting
- Readmissions: When a patient requires readmission to the hospital after a recent admission

These focus areas fit within the national Partnership for Patients (PfP) areas for improvement. PfP is an initiative of the Centers for Medicaid Services that aims to decrease hospital-acquired conditions by 40 percent, and reduce preventable readmissions by 20 percent by the end of 2013.

Lean thinking and tools are applicable for every Oregon hospital. There is always opportunity to improve efficiency and maximize value-added processes to help meet patient safety goals. The Lean participants will learn tools and strategies that they can take beyond their core projects to all areas of hospital care.

The hospitals involved in this initiative are: Adventist Medical Center, Portland; Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center, Medford; Asante Three Rivers Medical Center, Grants Pass; Kaiser Sunnyside Medical Center, Clackamas; Lake District Hospital, Lakeview; Mid-Columbia Medical

Center, The Dalles; Mercy Medical Center, Roseburg; Pioneer Memorial Hospital, Prineville; Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, Portland; Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital, Newport; Silverton Hospital, Silverton; Sky Lakes Medical Center, Klamath Falls; St. Charles Madras; St. Charles Medical Center – Bend; St. Charles Medical Center– Redmond; Tillamook County General Hospital, Tillamook; Tuality Healthcare, Hillsboro; and Willamette Valley Medical Center, McMinnville.

Oftentimes, a barrier for hospitals to receive this kind of training is the cost involved. However, there is no charge for Oregon PfP hospital participants to participate in this program, as the cost is being covered by OAHHS as part of the PfP work in Oregon. This also means that the PfP projects that hospitals are currently working on are the subject of their Lean project.

Purdue Healthcare Advisors has a long history of process improvement work with a variety of hospitals and states. They are subject matter experts in Lean, and have trained 4,000 staff in Indiana in the past seven years. Recently, a Yellow Belt certification course was completed with 33 critical access hospitals in

partnership with the Indiana Rural Health Association.

When an organization gets involved in Lean improvement, momentum starts to build, and everyone in the organization becomes empowered. That's when an organization can make quantum leaps in quality, efficiency and patient safety. Patients are happier and more satisfied, and providers are freed from wasteful tasks and can spend more time with their patients. By making this investment in Lean, Oregon hospitals are highlighting their commitment to continuous improvement.

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