



Lean in Healthcare



If you have read our introduction to Lean Healthcare but have never experienced a Lean working environment you may struggle to accept some of the assertions made. Take some time to do some research into those hospitals around the world that have started to adopt a Lean philosophy. Read some of the readily available information on Lean and use your imagination with an open mind and you will soon recognise how Lean can be used in the context of a surgery, a ward, pathology lab, radiology department of finance department.

Key Challenges:

- Dispel the myth that healthcare is complex when in reality patients flow is repeatable and easy to analyse.
- Dispel the myth that the UK's healthcare is the best in the world - it could be, but it is not.
- Develop an acceptance that standardisation of processes and procedures is both realistic and practical and will result in more time with patients and more time on innovation and creativity.
- Establish clinical pathways and where possible form cells to carry out diagnostic tests in one visit.
- Remove complexities in the decision flow where several clinicians are involved with patient issues.
- Improve the value stream throughout the organisation, challenging the current practices and looking for the different pathways that a patient might take to share similar value streams.
- Dramatically improve cross functional communication and team work and set challenging targets for reducing patient throughput (e.g. it should not take 8 weeks to carry out 3 hours of diagnosis and treatment).
- Look at ways of increasing capacity by eliminating delays, increasing flow and levelling workload.
- Develop a broad understanding of NHS based lean waste (or muda) to reduce rework and waste that is endemic in healthcare systems.
- Reduce purchase spend by using kanban restocking systems at ward level; using work place organisational tools and standardisation procedures to ensure that the right stores are available in the right place.
- Challenge the methods of measuring hospital performance department by department which fail focus on benefits to patients.
- Demonstrate how value streams flow better after Improvement Events and set up good visual management systems so managers, staff and clinicians can see improvements.
- Most fundamentally develop an acceptance and understanding that time spent now on improvement activity at all levels, far from being an administrative distraction from patient care, will result in greatly improved service levels and cost reduction.

Tackling the Issues:

So how do Hospitals and the wider healthcare systems tackle these significant challenges?

Because the make up of our trusts are by necessity such large organisations with numerous separate functional areas - not to mention the different political structures - it is very difficult to know where to start and be prescriptive about where best to kick off a Lean healthcare programme.

Clearly nothing is going to be achieved if a lone voice is advocating change, so perhaps the first step is to create a shared vision amongst some like minded people from different departments and functions, both clinical and administrative.



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Try to get small groups of people initially interested or better still passionate about excellence and improvement. Once you have developed this initial ground swell of new thinking there are some tactical areas you can start to look at.

Because every organisation will have different challenges the initial entry point or starting point for a Lean healthcare programme might be slightly different. No matter - start somewhere and get some momentum going, you can always come back and tackle a more important issue later when you have gained wider commitment.

There are however some key principles for any Lean implementation in the Healthcare sector:

- Make clear what it is you mean by value in Lean terms, paint a clear picture and spell it out.
- Identify and map the value stream and pathways clearly defining the processes; this doesn't necessarily need to be done for the whole Trust, but at least for the areas to be initially tackled.
- Use Lean tools and techniques to make the process and value flow more effectively.
- Constantly seek to improve everything and to engage with others and other departments in the process.
- Visualise and demonstrate the benefits and the improvements to both patients and clinicians - and measure the impact.
- While you are doing this, develop some "change Agents" who will coach and mentor others to do likewise.
- Constantly challenge the sceptics and engage them in the process.

Try to set up some improvement teams who will be responsible for driving Lean healthcare and delivering the benefits.

Define the problems to be tackled - **The WHY**

What action you intend to take - **The WHAT**

How this will be achieved - **The WHO**

How you will sustain the results - **The HOW**

You might start by developing some broad aims and objectives around some of the key NHS priorities; this will give a focus to potential activity you want to commence.

Look at:

- Cancer treatment time and mortality.
- GP referral time and patient choice.
- Sexual Health appointment time.
- Targets for Health inequalities.
- Financial targets - budgetary balances
- Reducing long term conditions eg (Diabetes/CVD).
- Reduce CVD mortality.
- Eliminate SUIs.
- Improve Ambulance Response times.
- Productivity and efficiency - particularly last minute.
- Cancellations
- Medical outliers.
- Reduce needless harm.
- Eliminate waiting.

If you would like to learn more about how Lean can help your Trust, or ward or laboratory or surgery and dramatically improve its performance - *contact us* for an informal initial discussion.

CQM have been helping organisation from every conceivable sector implement Lean philosophies for over 10 years, including work in the Healthcare sector.



With measured savings of £124,600. CQM has helped shape the way forward for our business.