

Handling Patient's Supply during Inpatient Stay: Using Lean Six Sigma Techniques to Implement a Comprehensive Medication Handling Program

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Abstract : A Major Hospital had identified that there was no standard process for handling a patient's medication that they brought with them to the hospital. It was also identified that each floor was handling the patient's medication differently and storing it in multiple locations. Based on this disconnect many patients were leaving the hospital without their medication. The project team was tasked with creating a cohesive process to send a patient's unneeded medication home on admission, storing any of the patient's medication that could not be sent home, storing any of the patient's medication for inpatient administration, and sending all of the patient's medication home on discharge. The project team consisted of pharmacists, RNs, LPNs, members from nursing informatics and a project engineer and followed a DMAIC framework. Working together observations were performed to identify what was working and not working on the different floors which resulted in process maps. Using the multidisciplinary team, brainstorming, including affinity diagramming and other lean six sigma techniques, the best process for receiving, storing, and returning the medication was created. It was highlighted that being able to track the medication throughout the patient's stay would be beneficial and would help make sure the medication left with the patient on discharge. Using an automated medications dispensing system would help store, and track patient's medications. Also, the use of a specific order that would show up on the discharge instructions would assist the front line staff in retrieving the medication from a set location and sending it home with the patient. This new process will effectively streamline the admission and discharge process for patients who brought their medication with them as well as effectively tracking the medication during the patient's stay. As well as increasing patient safety as it relates to medication administration.

Keywords : lean six sigma, medication dispensing, process improvement, process mapping

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