

A Lean hospital – training internal Lean consultants

“The course was good, because it taught us tools and methods for improving continuity of care and inter-departmental collaboration.”

Heidi Vik, nurse

CHALLENGE

The University Hospital of North Norway is located in Tromsø, has 6,000 employees and covers a geographic area roughly the size of Denmark. In 2008, the hospital was reorganised according to a clinic and centre model. New clinics were established based on the idea that certain departments belonged together in order to provide continuity of care. Creating new clinics does not in and of itself mean better continuity of care; efforts need to be made to realise that goal.

After reorganisation, the hospital has initiated a comprehensive, long-term effort that will review and improve continuity of care in order to enhance patients' overall experience of their treatment. To ensure that the goal is achieved, the administration has decided that the hospital will implement Lean, with the assistance of Implement Consulting Group.

DIAGNOSIS

Most patients are satisfied with the treatment received, but many comment that they felt there was a lack of coordination between hospital units, and that there was a lot of unnecessary waiting and ineffectively used time – both before and during their hospital stay. Bottlenecks and ineffective operation are also a burden on employees. The administration decided to do something about this.

To start off the Lean initiative, clinic heads attended a two-day training course focusing on Lean management. Another 14 employees have subsequently completed Lean training, allowing them to serve as internal Lean consultants.

Each clinic and each centre now has its own Lean consultant, who is responsible

for improvements in that clinic or centre. Training builds on a theoretical overview of Lean tools, supplemented with specific examples taken from Lean projects implemented in the hospital sector.

Methods and tools are practised in exercises and in cases, and participants are able to compare what they learn with the situation and challenges faced by their own organisation. The course comprises three full-day sessions over a two-month period, and attendees are given homework assignments to be completed between sessions.

SOLUTION

- Lean tools (value stream analysis, waste analysis, 5S etc.)
- Production planning
- Flow and pace
- Improvement boards
- Kaizen events
- Herringbone diagrams
- Typical areas of improvement in the hospital sector

RESULT

The goal was to enable the hospital itself to take over the project, and for employees and managers to be proficient at working with Lean within a short period of time. After just six months the use of external consultants was reduced.

The internal Lean consultants are now responsible for the Lean project in the clinics. Current projects include: lung cancer assessment, blood testing, apoplexy and sepsis.

For more information
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