

Emergency Department Cuts Costs by \$230K, Reduces Wait Time 59%



The Problem

The Emergency department at this 150-bed, for-profit hospital struggled to provide timely, effective care for even its most critical patients. With wait times high and communication problems rampant, many patients were leaving the hospital without even seeing a physician. The Emergency department had to make dramatic changes if it hoped to fulfill its life-saving mission.

The LEAN Healthcare Solution

Under the guidance of HPP's expert facilitators, a team of hospital staff used a variety of LEAN Healthcare tools to uncover inefficiencies in the Emergency department. With problems identified, the staff was then able to craft solutions that would resolve even their biggest challenges.

First, the team relied heavily on value stream mapping. This process revealed that patients were spending, on average, almost 5 hours in the Emergency department from triage to discharge. Of that time, only 36 minutes was value-added for the patient; the rest was spent simply waiting for paperwork, a bed, or attention from staff. The value stream map revealed that poor communication and a lack of standardized staff roles were the primary causes behind such inefficiency. Following HPP's leadership, the LEAN team addressed the problem by creating standardized roles for Emergency staff, setting up a communications board, and installing a new phone system.

LEAN spaghetti diagrams and workspace analysis also helped the team in its quest to improve Emergency operations. These tools revealed barriers to patient care in the form of poor department layout and disorganized supply and equipment rooms. The most frequently used rooms, such as those designated for trauma patients, were located farthest from nurses' stations. In addition, patients with minor illnesses and injuries were spread throughout the department, sometimes occupying space needed for life-or-death treatment. Triage nurses were separated from the department entry area, and staff struggled to locate necessary equipment and supplies.

HPP led the LEAN team in reconfiguring the department to place frequently used rooms in closest proximity to nurses' stations. The team also created a separate Quick Room for Level 1 patients (those needing only a nurse's attention and no follow-up care) and standardized all equipment and supply rooms.

The Outcome

These changes had a dramatic, positive impact on Emergency operations.

- The hospital realized an annualized savings of \$230K in triage and primary nursing time combined.
- Patient wait time decreased by 59%, with total patient time in the department dropping to 2 hours.
- Better communication and physical layout markedly improved the department's ability to provide a physician's care to all patients who needed it.



To discuss how HPP can assist with your LEAN HEALTHCARE journey or Six Sigma Implementation: Call 615-265-2002 or e-mail: chagood@hpp.bz
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