

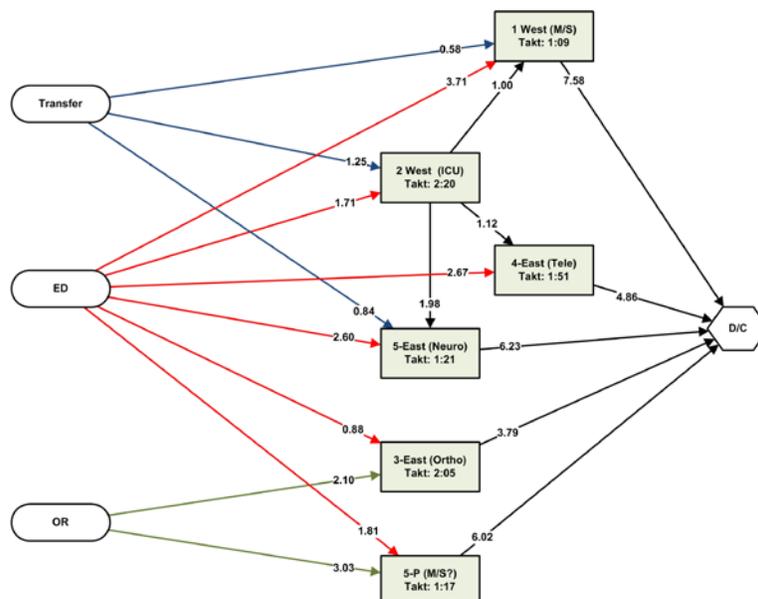


Improving Patient Flow

Patient flow and the discharge process is a natural starting point for implementing lean in your hospital. The financial impact of improving flow is well-known making an ROI on a flow improvement effort easy to calculate. A flow improvement effort using Lean Daily Management can be broken down into the following steps:

Step 1 – Conduct a Flow Analysis

Using existing data model the current state of patient flow with a simplified Value-Stream Map. This map will quickly identify the existing barriers to flow.



Step 2 – Investigate Barriers

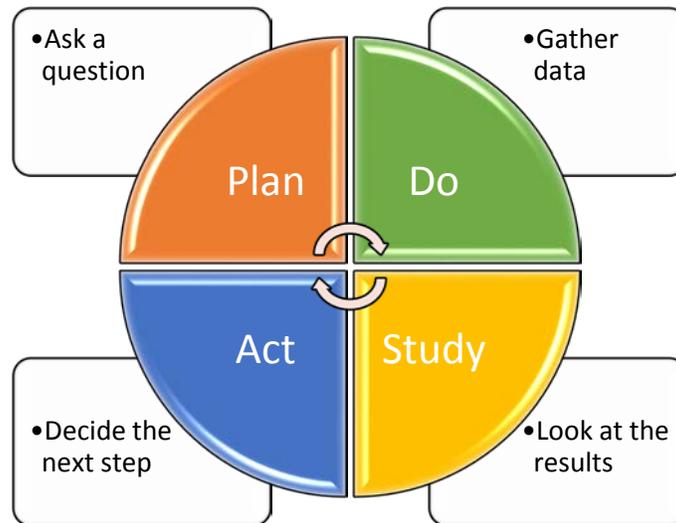
Now that the Value-Stream Map has identified where the barriers are the next step is to dig down and find out why they are happening. Usually the discharge process from the floor is identified as a prime location. If the results are inconclusive you should start at the back of the process and move upstream so that the process can be decompressed.

Investigating the barriers entails putting up a visual problem solving board and rounding on it daily to find out why delays are occurring. If the discharge process itself is identified an additional visual management board can be used to quickly drive outcomes while also conducting deep problem-solving.



Step 3 – Continuous Improvement

With the problem area identified and boards in place the next step is focused continuous problem-solving. As data accumulates the need for mini-kaizen events may arise. The focus though should remain on many small steps versus one huge leap. Use the Plan – Do – Study – Act cycle built into the boards to keep the project on track.



Step 4 – Re-Evaluate

As improvements are made update the Value-Stream Map to identify new barriers. This may involve solving problems off the nursing floor. The data will direct the next steps.

Step 5 – Continue the Improvement

As patient flow begins to increase new issues will continue to arise. Use the Lean Daily Management system you have built to tackle these problems. Expand the system to other problem areas in hospital such as quality, patient satisfaction, and OR efficiency.

For more information on how to improve patient flow with lean, and other how-to guides, tools, templates, and training material, or to find an expert to help guide you through your journey, visit www.LeanDailyManagement.com.