Implementing Daily Management System Huddle Boards to Improve Communication Across Satellite Laboratories

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In a laboratory setting with fast-paced changes and heavy demands on staff, day-to-day communication across departments is challenging, yet paramount to resource sharing and real-time problem solving. Children’s Mercy Hospital Kansas City (CMH) has implemented system-wide lean practices focused on clinical and operational excellence. Our laboratory mission, or True North, is to produce clinically relevant laboratory results and information to assist in the diagnosis, treatment and prognosis of patients in a timely manner, by:

- Reducing Errors – Pre-analytical, Analytical & Post-analytical
- Maximizing employee engagement and productivity
- Reducing waste
- Problem solving is a daily occurrence.

Every department is required to identify situations that could cause delays in patient care. These issues are documented as “Quick Hits” (being completed within the department in three days or less) or “Big Issues” (taking additional time, resources, and possibly external departments). Each problem is assigned to a lead and given a due date to report back. Progress is reviewed during huddles and documented using Harmony Balls showing progress. These sheets can be used to show inspectors documentation of issues resolved in the department.

Department are required to first determine what MESS red/green thresholds that affect patient care. This requires breaking down testing platforms, staffing matrix and supply and inventory par values to ensure continual and efficient patient care. Any downtime, critical staffing level, or backlog that can cause delays in testing should be reported red for the day.

Metrics are also included in daily reporting, focusing on Safety, Efficiency, Delivery of Services, and Stewardship or Resources. These metrics should be department specific, timely, and patient centered.

CMH uses Polycom RealPresence to video conference huddles at the Tier 2 Laboratory Management huddle, as well as the hospital Tier 3 level. WebEx and Skype are other options for teleconferencing.

Conclusion

The Daily Management System has allowed for improved communication between shift exchange and departments throughout the hospital. The standardized process empowers frontline employees to identify abnormalities in staffing and equipment, resolution of issues, and efficiencies in process improvement. This bottom-up approach aligns with the True North mission allowing employees to become engaged and more solution-driven.

Health systems with multiple satellite locations are able to connect via telecommunication technology, allowing for real-time reporting and deployment of resources. This ensures optimal utilization of resources that can be reallocated based on volume drivers within the department. Aligning department readiness and metrics with patient outcomes helps build a highly reliable organization focused on continuous improvement.

In this continuously changing healthcare environment, institutions must become more efficient with limited resources, focused on clinical improvement, and empowering staff to drive change. CMH is an effective lean tool for organizations wanting to break down silos, improve communication between departments, and strive towards clinical and operational excellence.

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