

Outpatient Pharmacy Workflow Improvement

Problem and Opportunity

A hospital outpatient pharmacy was having patient dissatisfaction issues with long wait times for prescriptions. The pharmacist and pharmacy tech workflow appeared to be chaotic.

Lean Sigma Approach

A SigmaMed Solutions consultant helped the pharmacy team identify problems with flow. The team came up with two key problems:

- Many orders were missing critical information when the customer called in or came to the order window. Problems with the order weren't resolved until the prescription was filled resulting in frustrating customer delays and pharmacy staff interruptions. The team created a checklist to triage whether the customer had all the information necessary to fill a prescription. Complete requests were immediately filled. Incomplete requests due to illegible or unsigned prescriptions or incomplete insurance information were handled by one of the pharmacy techs at a separate desk in a back room. The order wasn't filled until all of the order details were complete. The customer with the incomplete order was informed of the delay and the reason for the delay and given an estimated time for completion.
- The pharmacy flow was analyzed with a spaghetti diagram. Pharmacy staff were wasting considerable time and steps to accommodate the equipment layout for filling prescriptions. Simple modifications to the filling line such as relocating a printer and a telephone reduced the wasted effort and time.
- Prescriptions for discharging patients from the inpatient floor were picked up by the pharmacy as soon as it opened. That allowed the pharmacy to fill those prescriptions when the pharmacy was less busy vs. having several discharged patients all show up at the same time.

Results

Customer satisfaction results were significant with only small changes to workflow. Prescriptions with complete information could be filled in as little as 15 minutes. Many discharged inpatients only had to wait a few minutes to pick up their prescriptions. Customers who were informed upfront that there was a delay were more tolerant of waiting for the order to be corrected.

“Lean Six Sigma Quality and Productivity Solutions for Healthcare”

www.sigmamed-it.com

(303) 666-6776 main