

PROVIDING SOLUTIONS FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE

Leveraging Industry Experience in Healthcare

Racca Solutions Group has saved our clients, in other industries, millions of dollars based on our practical Lean methodology and introducing these same strategies into healthcare will assist in achieving similar goals. Identification and eradication of waste without sacrificing quality and the need for tools and techniques to assist in the reduction of waste is also critical in healthcare. Thus, environments using Lean management techniques will succeed because they employ methods and techniques to support waste reduction, provide a greater return on investment and overall performance improvement.

Case Study: Hospital Urgent Care Facility

Situation Analysis: A major metropolitan pediatric hospital had a suburban satellite campus. They were in the process of adding an urgent care unit at the satellite campus. The hospital needed help developing and optimizing: the transactional flow (due to the proximity of urgent care to the hospital), patient communication processes, and handoffs between the different organizations. They also wanted to identify process requirements and determine whether the patient population required any unique services based on demographics.

Approach: Racca Solutions Group (RSG) was engaged to work with a staff team - including subject matter experts - to conduct a kaizen event for the new unit. RSG supported the business process team with:

- Interview sessions,
- Facilitating discussion to determine gaps and opportunities
- Evaluation of patient demographic data
- Process mapping activities
- Facilitating groups during brainstorming sessions (Kaizen blitz)

At the central campus, the emergency room and urgent care were separate offices, but at the satellite campus – just a wall separated the two units. It was determined that a different screening process was needed at the satellite campus – to determine whether to steer a patient to the emergency room or to urgent care. Also, the team needed to decide what they were going to do about a fast track program offered by the emergency center.

Due to EMTALA requirements, the satellite facility needed a way to handle the risk of having the two facilities so close together. Finally, a process was needed to manage patients who would register with both facilities to try to bypass lines.

In certain cases, it was obvious that someone with a critical or life-threatening condition needed to go to the emergency room and someone with a minor ailment needed to go to urgent care. But what about people with moderate conditions? When was it appropriate to fast track a patient in urgent care – but not send the patient to the emergency room? To further complicate matters, the emergency room was opened 24 hours per day – but urgent care was opened from 7:00 a.m. through 11:00 p.m.

There was a great deal of language and cultural diversity among families of patients at the suburban location. Demographic trends were evaluated to identify patient volumes for parents whose second language was English, and to determine which languages were represented among the parent population.

In addition, the team identified days of the week and peak times of day when language support was particularly needed.

Improvements Identified: A process was developed to identify families that registered at one facility. Colored wristbands will be used to visually identify patients who are registered, and the IT system will be modified to allow both sites to see patient lists.

Based on interviews with the staff team (including subject matter experts), scripts were developed to handle screening for both the emergency room and urgent care – and a special script was developed to handle screening after hours. The scripts were reviewed, tweaked and finalized. Staff were then trained in these procedures.

RSG helped develop the business case for offering translation services at the unit. Additionally, we made sure that the procedures and processes for the emergency room met the legal standard (EMTALA).

Overall Results: Racca Solutions Group was able to use our expertise and tool kit to support a successful planning effort at the hospital. The hospital particularly valued our knowledge of healthcare and our outside perspective (based on our work with other industries). On their own – they wouldn't have asked some of the questions we did – nor come up with some of these unique solutions.