

Montana Rural Health Association

Using Lean Management Principles in Critical Access Hospitals



Montana Rural Health
Spring 2010

Montana State University's Industrial and Mechanical Engineering Department (I&ME), the Montana Health Research and Education Foundation (MHREF)'s Rural Hospital Flexibility Program (FLEX) and the Montana Office of Rural Health have teamed up to provide the Lean Healthcare Management Principles Project to Critical Access Hospital's (CAH) in Montana.

We usually associate "lean" with manufacturing. That's because this management philosophy was inspired by the work of W. Edwards Deming at manufacturers in post war Japan and caught the attention of the U.S. by way of Toyota Motor's manufacturing continuous improvement systems.

However, it's not surprising that classic lean management principles are starting to permeate healthcare. Eliminating waste, cutting costs and improving quality (three bedrock lean objectives) will continue to drive healthcare providers in the future no matter what shape healthcare reform takes.

Last year, a pilot project was conducted in a CAH in Western Montana and was met with great success. The participating facility completed

a billing cycle analysis. Once the analysis was completed a plan was created and implemented to mitigate mistakes and wasteful practices. From this project, the CAH has found their billing process more efficient and ultimately are able to provide better patient/customer service.

Some examples of other projects applying Lean Management Principles in a healthcare setting include:

- Improving medical chart flow
- More reliable inventory control / replenishment system for the emergency room
- Streamlining admissions or discharge processes
- Improving charge capture
- Laboratory work-flow analysis / work area redesign
- Decreasing patient wait time
- Billing cycle time reduction

MSUs Industrial and Mechanical Engineering Department, the

FLEX Program and the Office of Rural Health are offering this program again in the summer of 2010.. Four MSU I&ME interns will work in up to four CAH facilities over the summer. Students will spend two weeks at each of four sites to implement a pre-determined focused process improvement project for each facility under the supervision of key facility personnel and an Industrial Engineering Faculty member.

For further information regarding this project, please contact Natalie Claiborne at:

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Kris Sparks Elected President-Elect of National Rural Health Association

The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) congratulates Kris Sparks, director of the Washington State Office of Rural Health and a long-time NOSORH leader, on being elected president-elect of the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) by the organization's members. Sparks will serve a one-year term as president-elect before assuming her responsibilities as NRHA's leader in 2011.

Sparks has been working in the rural health arena since 1990 when she joined Rural Health Programs in the Washington Office of Rural Health. She is a past president of the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) and still serves on NOSORH's Board of Directors as its State Rural Health Association Liaison. She is also past

president of the Washington Rural Health Association and has served as a health panel advisor to the Rural Policy Institute.

Within NRHA, Sparks currently represents the Statewide Health Resources Constituency Group on NRHA's Health Policy Congress and serves as a Washington Rural Health Association representative on NRHA's State Association Council.

As part of her campaign platform, Sparks indicated she planned to continue NRHA's extraordinary grass roots approach to help keep "rural" at the forefront of national health reform and other healthcare-related debates. "NRHA has been very effective in getting the rural voice heard in the health reform debate,"



Sparks says. "Using members in every state to connect with their Congress people has been key in this grass roots effort. I look forward to continuing to use the membership to address critical national issues."

Sparks' selection continues the strong involvement of NOSORH members on the NRHA Board of Trustees. Denny Berens (Nebraska) will serve as president of the organization in 2010 and Sandra Durick (South Dakota) currently serves as its treasurer. Kristin Juliar (Montana) and Graham Adams (South Carolina) serve as chairs of the Frontier Constituency Group and State Office Council, respectively.

Looking for Training Opportunities? Check out Montana's Continuing Education Calendar

The Montana Office of Rural Health and Area Health Education Center, in response to requests for a centralized location to disseminate information on educational opportunities for all health related professions throughout the state, created the Montana Continuing Education Calendar.

The Continuing Education Calendar's online service began April 25, 2008. This calendar is a useful tool to identify and disseminate health profession's continuing education offerings and conferences for health professionals throughout Montana and is sent out on the 25th of every month.

The Montana Health Professions Continuing Education Calendar is designed for health care providers to search the Web for educational opportunities and conferences by health professional type. The postings provide detailed information on the continuing education opportunity including the date, time, provider, cost, description, format and contact information.

The calendar, which currently contains a listing of educational offerings, can be viewed on the Montana Area Health

Education Center & Office of Rural Health Web site at:

<http://healthinfo.montana.edu/continuingeducationcalendar/>

In addition to the online calendar there is an electronic Newsletter. To date, the e-Newsletter list serve is distributed to 952 statewide constituents and has posted continuing education opportunities by over 110 organizations.

If you would like to receive the e-Newsletter or learn how to post your organizations educational opportunities, please send an email to:

kstenehjem@ruralcenter.org.

Or sign up via the web at:

http://www.ruralcenter.org/scripts/mtce_newsletter.php





NRHA Conference Calendar

May 18

Rural Medical Educators Conference
Savannah, GA

May 18-21

2010 Annual Rural Health Conference
Savannah, GA

June 16-18

Medication Use in Rural America Conference
Kansas City, MO

July 21-23

Quality and Clinical Conference
Portland, ME

September 28-29

Rural Health Clinic Conference
Kansas City, MO

September 28-29

Critical Access Hospital Conference
Kansas City, MO



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