Once associated strictly with manufacturing companies such as Toyota, Lean thinking is now used increasingly by hospitals to boost productivity, improve quality and increase patient value.

The objective of Lean in a hospital setting is to identify and eliminate processes that add no value for patients — in other words, waste. There are typically seven forms of waste targeted by Lean:

- Waiting
- Excess Motion
- Overproduction
- Defects
- Transportation
- Storage
- Defective processes

A Lean initiative begins by stopping and observing the process in question with fresh eyes — or in Lean parlance, Eyes to See. The objective is to identify opportunities for eliminating waste that may not be obvious to people performing the tasks each day.

With Lean, those very same people are responsible for suggesting ways to change the process and for implementing those changes to see if they work.

The key is to have clear metrics. Changes that don’t produce measurable results are discarded. Changes that do add value are incorporated into the process.

The true power of Lean is that a few small, inexpensive changes often have a very large impact. A good example is what Sodexo-led Food and Nutrition Services employees achieved at The Miriam Hospital.

This Lean initiative at The Miriam Hospital is only one of several Lean projects implemented by Sodexo in 2010. For more information about Sodexo’s Lean capabilities, contact 86 Hopmeadow Street Simsbury, CT 06098-9470 800 432 6663 • www.sodexouusa.com

Sodexo-led “Lean” Initiative Produces Major Improvements in Patient Dining.

Like other hospitals around the country, The Miriam Hospital in Providence, RI is continually challenged to increase its value to patients without increasing its costs. One way the hospital is addressing this challenge is by embracing the concept of Lean, a way of thinking long used by other industries to improve quality, cut lead time and reduce costs.

The objective of Lean is to maximize value by identifying and eliminating steps and activities that are of no value to patients — in other words, waste. A good example of Lean in action is what Food and Nutrition Services employees at The Miriam Hospital, under the guidance of Sodexo, achieved by applying Lean thinking to the process of assembling patient trays.

**THE POWER OF LEAN**

![Image of The Miriam Hospital](image)

**The Miriam Hospital**
Providence, Rhode Island

- 247-bed acute care hospital.
- Part of Lifespan, a four-hospital integrated health system serving residents of Rhode Island and Southern New England.
- A major teaching affiliate for The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University.
- Four consecutive Magnet designations for nursing excellence.
- Leader in psychiatry and behavioral health.

**Lean Thinking Pays Off Big for The Miriam Hospital**

Sodexo-led “Lean” Initiative Produces Major Improvements in Patient Dining.

**20%**

**Higher Productivity**

**30 minutes**

**Savings Per Meal**

**Higher**

**Patient Satisfaction**
THE CHALLENGE
Food and Nutrition Services at The Miriam Hospital uses Sodexo’s Expressly for You – Personal Choice Dining®. In this one-on-one approach, patients have their own personal host or hostess who comes to their bedside, describes their menu choices, takes their order, returns to the kitchen, assembles their meal tray and returns to their room with their meal.

“It’s a great approach to patient dining,” says Sandra Cheng, Vice President, Support Services at The Miriam Hospital. “Our problem was the time it was taking hosts and hostesses to assemble the meal trays in the kitchen.”

“We wanted to improve the department’s ability to deliver trays to patients in an even more timely manner,” continues Cheng. “That meant speeding up the process in the kitchen.

THE SOLUTION
The Miriam Hospital turned to Sodexo, its management company for Food and Nutrition Services, to launch a Lean initiative focused on quickly improving the tray assembly process. A team was formed to lead the process, but everyone in the department had input into identifying solutions and implementing the changes.

To assist the department, Sodexo brought in an expert consultant, along with a group of “fresh eyes” from other hospital food service departments. Their first step was to observe the tray assembly process and report back to the team.

“It was really surprising,” recalls Margarida McFarland, Personal Choice Dining Manager at The Miriam Hospital. “They pointed out things that were so obvious — once we stopped and really looked at them.”

“We made a few simple changes to the kitchen layout and the staging of the tray delivery carts,” continues McFarland, “then measured the results.”

THE OUTCOMES
Those results are illustrated in the graphic to the right. The number of trays assembled per minute rose 20%. This increase in productivity shaved off 30 minutes from every meal period. And patient satisfaction scores for both food temperature and overall meal quality went up as well.

Faster turnaround in the kitchen has meant that hosts and hostesses can spend more time with patients. “They are less rushed,” notes McFarland. “They can spend more time taking patient orders and serving meals.”

The changes have benefited nurses as well. With greater predictability in meal delivery, nursing has been able to go back to having the night shift deal with blood sugars instead of adding it to all the other duties of the day shift.

“This initiative is an excellent example of Lean in action,” notes Cheng. “The changes were obvious, but it took different Eyes to See to recognize the opportunities. The changes were measurable, so everyone knew quickly if they worked or not. Most importantly, the changes were simple things, but they made a big difference.”

“One of the great things about this initiative was the involvement of our employees,” adds Cheng. “Lean empowered our employees to improve their own work environment. The people responsible for performing the work were the ones who identified and implemented the changes.”

“With the help of Sodexo, we have begun our Lean journey,” states Cheng. “It is a journey that promises profound benefits for our patients, visitors and staff alike.”

Department eliminated time wasted locating and staging tray delivery trucks at the beginning of each meal by assigning specific parking spaces for each truck according to its place in line.

Wasted motion was eliminated by re-positioning tray delivery trucks during assembly and by making it easier to reach frequently ordered food and beverage items and correct color-coded cups and bowls.

Time-wasting bottlenecks were eliminated by splitting cold assembly station into two pods and revamping hot assembly station to accommodate two hostesses at a time.

Simple Changes...