

Summer 2017

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Recommended Citation

Roberts, Gurleen; Kennedy, Jack; Smythe, Catherine; Krahwinkel, Dawn; and Green, Melissa (2017) "Kaizen: Improving Patient flow," *Journal of the Georgia Public Health Association*: Vol. 7 : No. 1 , Article 34.

DOI: 10.21633/jgpha.7.135

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/jgpha/vol7/iss1/34>

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Kaizen: Improving patient flow

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Background: Since Cobb & Douglas Public Health (CDPH) achieved accreditation in May 2015, efforts to mature a culture of quality have been emphasized. In addition, the Adult Health Clinic moved to a new facility in Spring 2016. This move has improved many patient flow issues, but also has had unexpected consequences that spurred interest in doing several quality improvement (QI) projects.

Methods: Rather than doing one QI project at a time, a kaizen event was held. Kaizen is a Japanese term for continuous improvement. This workshop allowed the Adult Health Team to plan seven QI projects and implement them simultaneously over the next several weeks. After the first six weeks of implementation, nearly 14 different projects were in various stages of the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle. Baseline average patient flow for 1880 patient encounters was 75.11 minutes.

Results: Results are still pending. Preliminary results reflect increased collaboration among clinic staff and an increase in staff members taking the initiative to make improvements. Employee morale has improved, and employee and customer satisfaction seems to be improved.

Conclusions: The Adult Health Clinic used the LEAN methodology to reduce waste in the patient flow process and used the PDSA framework to structure their 14 QI projects. A kaizen event allows rapid improvements to be planned and implemented in a short period of time.

Key words: Quality Improvement, QI, Kaizen, LEAN, PDSA, QI Project, QI Team, Culture of Quality, accreditation, patient flow, nursing

<https://doi.org/10.21633/jgpha.7.135>

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