



Pittsburgh Regional Healthcare Initiative

Reprinted from *PRHI Executive Summary*, October-November 2003

Naida Grunden, editor

Allegheny General Hospital

Rapid improvement: a "lightning round"

At Allegheny General Hospital's 5C Learning Line, team members assembled in early October to tackle a

Drawer Organization

1. Medications
2. Basic Stock
3. Special Order Stock
4. Admission Supplies
5. Linen

long-standing problem. The nursing supply drawers in patients' rooms had both too much and too little: too many obscure items that were only needed occasionally; and too few of the vital items needed every day.

Instead of meeting upon meeting and stalled decisions, this group decided to get right down to work in a kind of problem-solving "lightning round."

Teaming up to solve the drawer problem quickly were: 5C Nurse Manager Rene Pallotti, Learning Line Leader Debra Ruckert and 5C Charge Nurses Pam Seigh and Sharyn Dorchak. PRHI team members observed, guided,

and learned from the effort.

The team didn't start from a standstill. For about 14 days before the experiment began, detailed observations of the drawers and how they were used revealed that much of the stock was idle. The team had time to think about what they use, what they don't, and what the ideally stocked drawer would look like. Then, in a few hours one morning, the 5C team:

- Redesigned the drawer experiment in four rooms (seven nurse servers).
- Reduced stock by 50%. (Extra stock is still allotted, "just in case.")
- Created a restocking system. When stock reaches a low point, clinical staff pull the hot pink reminder card and place it in a receptacle on the nurse server where it can be easily seen. During the once-per-shift filling of water pitchers, the Nurse Aide checks for the hot pink cards to see whether the drawers need

Basic Supplies - Drawer 2	Stock
Suture Removal Kit	1
4x4	2
2x2	6
IV Connector	3
EKG Patch	5
Saline	4
Alcohol Wipes	6 double
Specimen Cups	1
Tape	
2" silk	1
1" clear	1
1" paper	1

Drawer 2: Before . . .



. . . and after



restocking. Using the card as a sort of grocery list, the Nurse Aide picks the necessary supplies from the medication or linen room. Once items are picked, they are placed in the appropriate nurse server with the pink card. These items—including the pink card—are then placed in appropriate drawer. The Nurse Aide no longer needs to “remember to check” the drawers. If an item is low, the pink card alerts.

- Designed a system to handle fluctuating needs. If the patient will need for a special item, a hot pink order sheet lists additional supplies. The RN fills this out and places it in the receptacle on the side of the nurse server. The Nurse Aide responds during the pitcher fill.
- Restructured report so that the nurse updates the Nurse Aide about each patient in the assignment.
- Eliminated need for one form that the Nurse Aides were using.
- Nurse Aides designed an easy way to use the Kardex for additional information needs.

The group meets each Wednesday on 5C, and continues making small improvements in how they do their work—improvements rooted in their own observations. Frontline workers join other interested employees and leaders. The improvement sessions are guided by teachers trained in the principles of the Perfecting Patient Care System. On future Wednesdays, the group will begin improving supplies and work flow in patient isolation rooms. ☞



Waste: needless inventory removed from 23 nurse servers—half of the unit.

Results: savings in materials and time.

