

## ▶ How to Implement the LEAN Concept

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LEAN is one of the latest management imports to the healthcare sector. The term 'lean thinking' is based on the production philosophy which origins at Toyota Motor Corporation in Japan in the 1950's and its transfer to the West during the 1970's. The emphasis of the Toyota Production System is thought by many to focus upon eliminating non-value adding activities known collectively as 'waste' or 'muda,' in order to increase the percentage of value added activity in any process [1]. LEAN is maximizing value for the customer. Toyota itself highlights 'just-in-time' ('what is needed, when it is needed, and in the amount needed') and 'jidoka' ('automation with a human touch') as two important aspects ([http://www.toyota-global.com/company/vision\\_philosophy/toyota\\_production\\_system](http://www.toyota-global.com/company/vision_philosophy/toyota_production_system)).

The basic principles of LEAN in healthcare are focus on the customer/patient and constant improvement which is driven by the employees themselves. The goal is to optimize flows and eliminate all those activities that don't create any value for the patient. Whether making a car or a healthier patient, the approach fundamentally is about eliminating waste – from paperwork and inventory to waiting-room delays.

As Poksinska [2] barriers, challenges, enablers, and outcomes of implementing Lean production methods in health care. DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH: A comprehensive search of the literature concerning the implementation of Lean production in health care was used to generate a synthesis of the literature around the chosen research questions. FINDINGS: Lean production in health care is mostly used as a process improvement approach and focuses on 3 main areas: (1 points out in her review "The first barrier that needs to be overcome in Lean implementation is to convince staff that Lean can work in a healthcare setting... the usual reaction is that patients are not cars and health care organizations have completely different organizational settings than the automotive industry."

There are no specific methods for implementing LEAN in hospitals and there is no universal model of LEAN that can be directly applied but in the last 15 years Lean has been increasingly adapted and adopted in healthcare [3]. For example in 2011, 90% of Swedish public hospitals had implemented LEAN to some degree [4].

In healthcare, specifically, there are abundant case summaries of lean implementation in the literature however there has been almost no systematic research on how LEAN is implemented across dissimilar contexts within and between organizations [5]. Often LEAN is introduced in just a small part of the organization but a general opinion is that to gain the full potential of LEAN the whole organization has to be involved and work hard for years.

This introduction should be considered as an appetizer or inspiration for you to think LEAN. The presentation will focus on examples of successful implementation of lean thinking in healthcare and personal experience of working with the LEAN concept. I will present a couple of tools and some good examples which you hopefully could relate to and thereby get you started thinking on how you and your colleagues could get your mind set to continuous improvement.

### References:

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