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Board of Registration in Pharmacy

Advisory: Lean Concepts

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 112, §§ 39G (6), 39H (6), and 39I (7), the Board of Registration in Pharmacy (“Board”) would like to remind licensees that the implementation of lean concepts training in certain pharmacy practice sites is required. Although lean concepts are recommended in all pharmacy practice sites, it is required for sterile compounding pharmacies, complex non-sterile compounding pharmacies, non-resident sterile compounding pharmacies, non-resident complex non-sterile compounding pharmacies, and institutional sterile compounding pharmacies. In these settings, pharmacy licenses may not be renewed until the licensee certifies annually that their employees have been trained in lean concepts.

Lean is a systematic approach of identifying, eliminating, and preventing waste in every step of a process in order to create value. When implemented into pharmacy practice, lean concepts allow pharmacies to promote continuous improvement in quality and efficiency and therefore add value for their patients.

Lean concepts should be implemented in a structured training program, designed through careful inspection of current workflow and operational systems in order to identify points of value and points of waste. They should be individualized to every pharmacy.

Best practice standards are the “5S” tools of Lean which should be utilized to improve pharmacy efficiency:

1. Sort: Unnecessary items and/or steps should be removed.
2. Straighten: The pharmacy should be organized so processes flow freely.
3. Scrub: The pharmacy area should be cleaned and equipment should be checked; clutter should be removed.
4. Standardize: A system should be set up to maintain new flow.
5. Sustain: The new standard should be followed daily to avoid slips.

Additionally, lean principles should be used to identify points of value in pharmacy processes. All steps should be identified and the steps that do not create value should then be eliminated. Services should only be provided when needed. There should be continual attempts to eliminate waste and improve flow and quality.

Points of waste should be identified and eliminated in accordance with lean concepts. Examples of waste in the pharmacy practice setting include but are not limited to:

1. Correction: Adverse drug events, medication errors.
2. Overproduction: Excessive filled prescriptions to be returned to stock.
3. Transportation: Inefficient delivery routes.
4. Motion: Poor pharmacy layout.
5. Waiting: Imbalanced workload and low productivity.
6. Inventory: Excessive inventory, frequent stock outages, or expired drugs.
7. Lack of standardization: Performing tasks differently each time.
8. Underutilization of skills: Any ideas not considered and implemented.

Recommended Actions

Educational material is up to the discretion of the licensee, but the implementation of lean concepts should be individualized to each specific pharmacy practice setting.

Generally, the lean training should provide an understanding of:

1. The definition of lean concepts.
2. The concepts of waste and value.
3. The benefits of lean in pharmacy practice settings.
4. The basic lean principles and their use to improve pharmacy processes.
5. The use of the “5S” tools of lean in improving the pharmacy workplace organization.

Please direct any questions to: Pharmacy.Admin@mass.gov