Medical Storeroom Organization – 5S

**Problem:** Supply storerooms containing critical documents, patient personal care items, and room conversion accessories in the Clinical Laboratory at a medical facility were chronically disorganized. Rooms were disorderly and did not provide adequate space for daily-use and must-have inventory items.

**Symptoms:**
- Supplies could not be located quickly, which led to reorder requisitions for items that were in stock but couldn't be found
- Conducting inventories and ordering of supplies took an excessive amount of time reduced patient-service activities
- Supply quantities varied widely with too many of some supplies and too little of others
- Supply storerooms contained obsolete and expired items, leading to a false sense of adequate supply quantities
- It was found that staff horded supplies in personal areas because “they needed them” and “[the supply rooms] never have what I need,” which skewed balances and monthly budget reviews
- Staff complained that they needed more space.

**Solution:** The 5S Team worked in two storerooms and achieved substantial progress in eliminating the problems. Storeroom improvements have been a great benefit to staff members and resulted in buy-in for formal improvement using Lean Enterprise tools and principals. After completing the reorganization of the first storeroom, several individuals from the Anatomic Pathology department were given a tour of the completed storeroom. When they saw what the team achieved, they immediately requested the team’s assistance and expertise in producing similar results in their storeroom. The 5S team replicated their success the department storeroom and freed up 40 percent of the storeroom space by implemented methods similar to those they deployed in the Clinical Lab.

The project objective of improving ease of use was a resounding success. Staff can now ask colleagues who have never even seen the storeroom to retrieve an item and can be located within 30 seconds.

**Actions:**
- A “One-Point Lesson” poster, a visual prompt of how to quickly locate supply items
- An alphabetical list of all supply items was placed in the doorway
- Items were rearranged and segmented based on use
- The supply delivery schedule was changed from one large shipment per week to two smaller shipments that were easier to receive and place in stock

**Impact:**
- A 17 percent increase in available storage space in the Clinical Lab storeroom was realized
- Storage space in the Anatomic Pathology Lab storeroom saw a 40 percent increase in storage space
- Locations were reorganized resulting in staff ability to locate items within 30 seconds
- Shipment frequency was doubled, decreasing the wait time for re-supply without increasing costs