

Health Care Leaders from Across North America Learn from Lean Improvements at BIDMC and Atrius

Background

Lean thinking strategies brought national attention to BIDMC and Atrius Health during a visit from a group of more than 50 nationwide health care leaders last week.

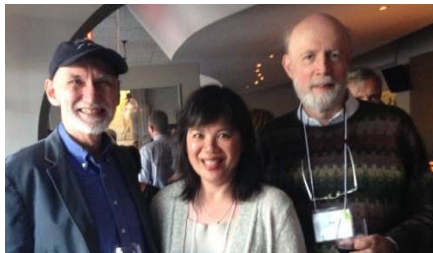


BIDMC and Atrius are proud members of the Healthcare Value Network (HVN), an organization that unites health care leaders sharing a commitment to Lean concepts. HVN members from around the country spent three days observing patient care improvements that have fostered high quality and efficiency at BIDMC and Atrius.

The visit also showcased lean practices achieved through collaboration between the two organizations.

Day 1: Atrius Health Improvement Work

Participants started their visit by touring a newly-built Atrius medical practice, Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates in Concord, MA, which utilized Lean concepts in designing the building. They started with a vision for what a better patient-centered facility could be and we saw first-hand the many design elements made both in the processes and facility to support flowing value to the patients. The layout allows staff to better communicate and coordinate timely and efficient care. The building was featured in Healthcare Design Magazine in November 2012.



Lean gurus from the Lean Enterprise Institute, John Shook (left) and Jim Womack (right) joined Alice Lee (middle) at this landmark visit

Day 2: BIDMC Improvement Work

Gemba walks, in which participants visit work environments to observe and ask questions, continued at BIDMC during the second day of the visit. Alice Lee, Vice President of Business Transformation, told visitors, "Lean thinking at BIDMC has created a cultural shift in performance improvement. We're figuring out ways to coordinate and synchronize processes so that patients get the care they need as soon as they need it – safely and efficiently – every single time."



Staff involved in GI's improvement work showed guests the new visual board used to coordinate patient flow through the unit

BIDMC's Business Transformation team led guests on three different walks to see and learn from continuous improvement efforts happening across BIDMC. Visitors observed and interacted with staff and physicians to understand how the patient experience is improved every day.

The group studied a standardized room entry process in the Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU) on West Clinical Center 7, learned how staff are working together to optimize patient flow in the Gastrointestinal Endoscopy Unit and spoke with employees in Food Services about how a new inpatient tray delivery system dramatically improved patient satisfaction.

Later, visitors learned and practiced a new technique for identifying safety behaviors by going to 12 different locations throughout BIDMC. The technique was recently piloted in the operating rooms to support employee safety and mitigate harm.

Closing out day two, a physician panel highlighted the BIDMC medical staff's reputation for active participation in Lean thinking.



Anjala Tess (left), MD, Associate Director of the Internal Medicine Training Program
Kevin McGuire (middle), MD, Chief of the Orthopaedic Spine Service
James Heffernan (right), MD, Primary Care Section Chief, Healthcare Associates

Day 3: BIDMC Improvement Work

The visit concluded on Friday with presentations to spotlight two collaborative achievements between BIDMC and Atrius, including an effort to reduce emergency admissions for cellulitis and a plan to redesign the BIDMC perinatal service line based on Lean principles.

Feedback from guests on the third day was overwhelmingly positive and many mentioned how powerful it was to hear about collaborative Lean work between BIDMC and Atrius.

"BIDMC and Atrius have a lot of confidence in each other because we share a commitment to patients, to Lean principles and to the 'triple aim' [improving the care experience, improving population health and reducing health care costs]," said Abby Flam, Senior Liaison Officer for Atrius, BIDMC and Harvard Medical Faculty Physicians.

"We designed the ideal workflow with the best technology to create an integrated medication management system which is safe, effective, respects our staff, and provides the best care to our patients."
– Rachel Hutchinson



Lessons Learned

Sharing across the Healthcare Value Network organizations has been invaluable in accelerating our learning. Lean performance improvement can be a collaborative effort between organizations.



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