

Hospital adopts 'Lean Thinking'

Pampa site's new program helps reduce work errors

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PAMPA — Nurses at Pampa Regional Medical Center now exchange reports about patients at shift changes. The hospital recently learned that a high number of errors occurs during shift change.

Patients now require significantly less paperwork for providers to spend time documenting.

"Out of about 24 pieces of paper, we cut it down to about eight," said Denise Daves, chief nursing officer at Pampa Regional.

The changes are a result of a hospitalwide program aimed at reducing medical errors and increasing hospital efficiency.

Pampa Regional officials started a "Lean Thinking" initiative late last year. The mission seeks to evaluate all facets of the hospital's processes.

Hospital officials hope the improved ways of doing things will help increase patient safety, reduce costs and improve overall quality of care.

"We give health-care staff lousy processes to work with," Daves said. "In implementing the lean process, we were looking to improve our processes."

The 115-bed Pampa Regional is one of the first hospitals in its chain, Signature Hospital Corp., to start the system.

Any Pampa Regional employee can enter a report at any computer in the hospital at any time.

The process, which can be done anonymously, takes about three minutes and asks questions specific to the problem the employee is entering.



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Jeanine Malone, director of medical services at Pampa Regional Medical Center, demonstrates how hospital employees enter information on errors or near errors. The hospital recently started an innovative process to record errors. The system aims to reduce medical errors, increase efficiency and cut medical costs.

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Senior hospital staff then review daily the reports entered, view trends, and develop ways to prevent

errors or near-misses from happening again and streamline hospital operations.

"The goal is not to reduce staff," Pampa Regional Chief Executive Todd Lorenz said.

Daves said the process is about providing better quality services to patients.

Patient safety incidents resulted in 238,000 preventable deaths nationally and cost the federal Medicare program \$8.8 billion from 2004 and 2006, according to HealthGrades, an independent health care ratings company.

While Pampa Regional hopes to improve more than just patient safety, nurses can spend more time at a patient's bedside if the hospital can reduce the time staff spends on other tasks.

Toyota used a similar system to streamline the process for building cars.

"Efficiency, cost savings and effectiveness are all things you look for in building a car," said Terry Barnes, Pampa Regional director of marketing.

"We are just implementing it in a hospital setting."