3sHealth hosts Lean 3P event

3sHealth hosted its first 3P (Production Preparation Process) event the week of October 1, 2012. The purpose of this Lean event was to examine the dock-to-dock distribution of linen from processing plant to the end user site. Over 40 stakeholders including: laundry workers and managers; housekeepers; materials management staff; infection prevention and control, and ergonomics experts; union representatives; and truck drivers gathered at 3sHealth’s Imagination Space in Regina.

Participants were divided into teams to map out truck routes and to design carts for transporting the laundry once it reaches the facility. The group learned about the importance of consistent infection prevention and control practices and appropriate ergonomic practices. The results of some of this work will be implemented right away and some will be considered with the provincial laundry solution.

A current-state assessment of laundry distribution, including riding along on trucking routes, was completed prior to the 3P event. This information, Lean training, ergonomics, safety, and infection prevention and control information was shared and incorporated into the team assignments completed during the week. Reports were presented at the end of the week.

Many participants, including Hidy Blommaert, Director, Operational Support Services with Sunrise Health Region, felt the best part of the week was the collaborative spirit everyone used to solve problems: “The more we collaborate and bring all the stakeholders together, the more we’ll be able to build a better system. I’m excited for the future!”

Andrew Will, CEO of 3sHealth, commented on the success of the 3P event. “It was exciting to see everyone working together, sharing their expertise and discovering ways to improve the provincial laundry distribution system. At the beginning of the event it seemed like a daunting task, but using the 3P process and with the dedicated efforts of everyone, we had great success! The end result is a solution that we’ve developed together.”

The information collected at the 3P event will provide practical ideas for distribution of linen throughout the province. Improvement initiatives have begun to occur at the regional level.

3sHealth.ca
Finger on the Pulse

3sHealth aims to provide services and initiatives that add value to Saskatchewan’s health care system and the people it serves. In this effort, 3sHealth works with health regions (RHAs), the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA), and various other stakeholders in the system to implement new initiatives and services. 3sHealth is consistently engaged with stakeholders to ensure projects remain on schedule and stakeholders receive quality service and support. While a number of engagement tools are used, 3sHealth recently implemented Pulse surveys to quickly determine the status of stakeholder satisfaction with the projects.

The intent of the surveys is to obtain a quick, “one-click” measurement, or pulse, of the health of a project or service being facilitated by 3sHealth. Survey results allow 3sHealth to identify any potential concerns and signal to the project team if further investigation may be necessary. Tony Weeks, Vice President, Change Management & Performance explains, “As 3sHealth moves forward with provincial shared services, we recognize the need to identify areas of potential improvement and successes in a timely manner. This simple survey gives us the ability to identify areas of concern early so that we may launch deeper investigations and respond with appropriate action quickly. Identifying examples of success as they occur allows us to take the lessons learned and integrate them into our processes and procedures. The initial survey has already provided a large amount of vital information, which 3sHealth is currently using to develop action plans.”

3sHealth conducted its first Pulse surveys in October. The question, “How satisfied are you with the project?” was sent out to project stakeholders in the health regions and Saskatchewan Cancer Agency for each of the major shared service initiatives currently underway in the province – Gateway Online (GO), the provincial laundry strategy, and GHX (Global Healthcare Exchange). Respondents were asked to choose their level of satisfaction on a scale from very satisfied to very dissatisfied, and had the option to provide comments.

The GHX project is one example where 3sHealth responded quickly to stakeholder concerns. Earlier this year, 3sHealth identified that the project was behind schedule and had a number of implementation issues that needed to be addressed. The implementation has been challenging given the integration required between vendor systems, GHX, RHA financial systems and 3sHealth. The Pulse survey confirmed that the state of the project was significantly impacting stakeholder satisfaction. 3sHealth responded to concerns by dedicating a Project Manager to work with the vendor, GHX, in identifying, logging and resolving issues. 3sHealth also worked with regions to develop a revised implementation strategy that continues to move the project forward. Additional tools such as bi-weekly conference calls, issue logs and a project SharePoint site were developed to help manage the project and communication among stakeholders. 3sHealth is confident that the corrective action taken will help ensure a successful implementation. In addition, a follow-up survey to the initial Pulse was recently distributed and the results indicated that stakeholders felt the GHX project had improved and is moving in the right direction.

Comparative results from the November Pulse survey indicate that the actions taken as a result of the October survey results are effectively addressing concerns. Overall response rates have also increased. Pulse surveys will be sent out monthly for the Gateway Online, provincial laundry and GHX projects, and will be conducted for additional shared service projects as they are introduced.
In partnership with Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA), 3sHealth has been pursuing initiatives to achieve efficiencies and savings in Saskatchewan’s health system. The savings target for shared services over five years, beginning in 2010, is $100 million. The cumulative savings by March 31, 2013 is expected to be $32.6 million. The organization has implemented initiatives that this year will achieve $7.3 million in new savings, with another $400,000 in progress.

Materials Management Explores Kanban

3sHealth is actively pursuing implementation of the Lean management system alongside health regions (RHAs) and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA) to identify opportunities for improved efficiency in the health system. Recently Materials Management representatives from 3sHealth and the regions attended a Lean seminar to understand Kanban; a process that supports the movement of supplies from supplier to end-user with a focus on Just-in-Time (JIT) delivery. Kanban sometimes uses a “grocery store” system where supplies are taken off of shelves for consumption, and re-stocking occurs when a visual signal (Kanban card) indicates that re-ordering is necessary. It ensures that re-orders only occur after a given number of products have been consumed.

The Kanban seminar was hosted by John Black and Associates. During the seminar, participants were able to apply the process to real scenarios and analyze the outcomes. It provided Materials Management with an understanding of how Kanban could be used to reduce waste and ensure product quality for patients. Key concepts of Kanban are already being applied in some health regions. In addition, 3sHealth and Materials Management in the regions are looking at ways to integrate Kanban and other Lean tools with current supply chain projects such as GHX.

Materials Management representatives learn about Kanban from Lean consultants, John Black & Associates.

Savings will Exceed Target of $7 million for Health Shared Services

In partnership with Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA), 3sHealth has been pursuing initiatives to achieve efficiencies and savings in Saskatchewan’s health system. The savings target for shared services over five years, beginning in 2010, is $100 million. The cumulative savings by March 31, 2013 is expected to be $32.6 million. The organization has implemented initiatives that this year will achieve $7.3 million in new savings, with another $400,000 in progress.
A large percentage of cumulative savings to date are a result of group purchasing initiatives. A number of purchasing contracts have been moved to a provincial or multi-provincial level, or to a national group purchasing organization. Currently, over 45% of health system purchases are done through provincial contacts. As part of larger volume purchasing contracts, the RHAs and the SCA have saved millions of dollars. Of particular note:

- **$4.2 million in savings were achieved when Saskatchewan led work with Alberta and Manitoba to develop a tri-provincial contract for cancer drugs, and Saskatchewan saved $1.3 million alone;**

- **Saskatchewan also participated with British Columbia, Manitoba and other provincial organizations in a competitive process for peritoneal dialysis, achieving savings of approximately $400,000 per year for this province;**

- **Orthopedic surgeons and medical staff from across the province came together to help determine a common product for hip and knee replacements, with anticipated annual savings of $1.2 million; and,**

- **Group contracts were signed that saved $1.0 million in both medical/surgical supplies and skin and wound care.**

There have also been savings from a joint approach to liability insurance, and through implementing Gateway Online and paperless earning statements.

In pursuing shared initiatives, 3sHealth works with stakeholders throughout the Saskatchewan health system as well as other provinces to ensure best practices are followed, quality products are being pursued and customer-driven processes are being developed. Through shared initiatives we are able to take a provincial approach to products and processes, resulting in more uniform training for professionals and consistent care for patients across the province. Shared initiatives result in improved quality and efficiency in the health system, as well as cost savings.
Provincial Contract for Orthopaedic Implants

3sHealth worked with Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) to sign a provincial contract for orthopaedic implants. The contract includes components for hip and knee replacements, and is expected to result in annual savings of approximately $1.2 million.

The signed agreement means that the five health regions performing orthopaedic surgery will use components from the same supplier for hip and knee replacements. Having a standard product across the province will result in benefits for patients and health care workers. Surgeons and clinical staff will be familiar with a common product and technique, making their transition between regions easier and enhancing their ability to treat patients from across the province. As a result, patients can better access and receive consistent care.

The contract was finalized early this fall after a year-long RFP and evaluation process led by HealthPRO, a national group purchasing agency. The five-year contract began in November and was awarded to Zimmer of Canada Limited, a global provider of joint replacement technologies. Health regions will use other suppliers as necessary for revisions to existing implants.

The supplier was selected based on extensive product evaluation. A stakeholder advisory group was formed to assist with developing selection criteria and reviewing clinical aspects of proposals. The advisory group included surgeons, nurses, operating room technicians, sterilization staff and materials management representatives from across the regions.

Kendra Frey, Business Director, Clinical Specialties, said on behalf of HealthPRO that “the surgeons and staff involved in the process were diligent about selecting a quality product for patients. When you bring diverse players together from different facilities, you know that products are being evaluated from many angles. It was impressive to see different health regions working together to find a common solution for better patient care.”

Through joint purchasing initiatives 3sHealth aims to develop consistency in products, services and processes that result in quality improvements as well as leverage cost savings that can be redirected to patient care. This achievement is important as 3sHealth continues to work with regions and clinical staff to standardize products. The work done on this project has set an example for future initiatives that will engage Saskatchewan’s frontline health care workers in finding better solutions for patient care.

A Shared Solution to Laundry and Linen Services: Update

3sHealth continues its work to modernize the delivery of the province’s central laundry and linen services. Currently the province’s six central laundry plants process about 75% of the institutional health care linen used in the facilities in the Regional Health Authorities and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. This represents a total of 23 million pounds of laundry per year for approximately 150 end user sites.

This fall the Laundry Team, with representatives from regional laundries and other stakeholder groups, evaluated the data that the team has been collecting. This data included information about best practices and improved technology, current costs and projected future costs, capital needs, human resource considerations, infection prevention and control, and worker safety.

Decision makers are evaluating a comprehensive report of findings to understand the options for a provincial laundry solution. It is expected that a decision will be announced early in 2013.
Information Systems Improvements

Technological shared services result in improved service and efficiencies

Saskatchewan’s health information leaders from the Ministry of Health, the provincial health regions, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, 3sHealth and eHealth Saskatchewan are working collaboratively to leverage their collective information technology (IT) capabilities, resources and strengths to improve Saskatchewan health care.

To achieve provincial targets set in the Saskatchewan Health System five-year plan, these leaders are developing solutions to improve the workplace experience for employees, support more efficient processes and ensure technology investment is appropriate to support improved patient care and ensure sustainability. There are significant efficiencies to be realized by applying Lean tools to reduce waste or non-value added steps, and establishing consistent standards that can be replicated across the province. Automating processes for various behind the scenes work, such as human resources, finance, benefits, payroll, business intelligence and procurement is easier if processes are standardized first. Common processes, combined with automation, releases staff time to support more engaged and focused patient care.

Human Resource solutions

A business case is being developed to look at the establishment of a provincial integrated human resource information system (HRIS) for the delivery of human resource, payroll and benefits services. 3sHealth has engaged KPMG to develop the business case which will be finalized in March 2013. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was posted in November signaling 3sHealth’s interest in a HRIS and inviting interested parties to submit their qualifications. Details provided in the submissions will assist in determining the HRIS requirements for the business case.

The ground work for this provincial system has already begun through the standardization and delivery of HR business processes with the creation and implementation of Gateway Online. Gateway Online is a secure web-based employee information solution being developed and implemented by the health regions, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and 3sHealth. When fully implemented, Gateway Online will be a comprehensive automated tool for human resource administrators to manage employee-related administrative processes and will provide employees with on-line access to their work-related information. A business case for a provincial approach to a staff scheduling system is also under consideration. Applying Lean methodology and automation to the staff scheduling processes will provide significant self-service opportunities for employees.

By moving these HR and scheduling functions on-line and automating the processes, health care administrators and employees will be able to spend less time on manual administrative processes and data entry, and be able to focus more on recruitment and retention work, employee career development, data collection for reliable planning and decision-making and front line care delivery. Uniform provincial processes, and other work accomplished with the implementation of Gateway Online and staff scheduling, will be foundational for the implementation of an integrated HRIS.

Supply chain solutions

3sHealth is working with GHX (Global Healthcare Exchange) to implement an e-commerce solution that will automate supply chain processes across the province. This system allows healthcare providers and suppliers to conduct business more efficiently through electronic ordering and invoicing of supplies. It will give providers the information they need on provincial contracts, suppliers, products and pricing. One of the greatest benefits of this technology will be the ability to easily gather purchasing data from across the province. As 3sHealth works to find savings for health regions and Saskatchewan Cancer Agency through group purchasing, this system will be able to provide the information needed to identify new opportunities. Significant cost savings, reduction in errors, reduced processing time and improved use of provincial contracts is anticipated.

The standardizing and automating of back office functions such as human resources, finance, benefits, payroll, business intelligence and procurement, are laying the foundation for larger provincial IT and supply chain strategies. Work done to establish provincial standards in shared and support services align with larger provincial strategies. Ultimately a provincial IT infrastructure, which is reliable and current, will assist in sustaining a quality health care system.