Lean 3P event provides insight to provincial laundry solution

For several months, 3sHealth has been working with the health regions to examine options for modernizing the delivery of the province’s central laundry and linen services. Currently 75% of the institutional health care linen used in the facilities in the Regional Health Authorities and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency are processed by the province’s central laundries. This represents a total of 23 million pounds of laundry a year for approximately 150 end user sites.

Over the past six months, a Laundry Team has been reviewing best practices and gathering an extensive amount of data. A business case that assesses options to retain a publicly funded system has been developed.

Andrew Will, CEO of 3sHealth, commented on the collaborative team approach occurring on provincial health care projects. “As we work on projects designed to make improvements for patients, the hallmark that has emerged is the benefit that comes from having people from the health regions and Saskatchewan Cancer Agency actively involved in those projects, leveraging their expertise and ideas, and putting that into the solution that we’ve developed together.”

To better inform the decision, 3sHealth hosted its first 3P (Production Preparation Process) event to examine options for distributing laundry throughout the province. Over 40 people 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 the week of October 1.

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 practices and appropriate ergonomic design for moving the laundry.

At the end of the week, participants reported on the present state fact gathering that happened prior to the event, the learnings on Lean, ergonomics, safety and infection control that assisted them while working on their team assignment, and the work that they completed over 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!”

At the wrap-up at the end of the week Will said, “When we started the week, we all had a discussion of expectations and fears for the process we were embarking on. It’s important to note that people were able to voice those worries, set them aside for the week, and work towards options in the best interests of patients.”

In the coming weeks, the Laundry Team will continue to evaluate the data and make its recommendation for the provincial laundry system. The information collected at the 3P event will inform the recommendation and provide practical ideas for implementing a new laundry and linen service in the province.