

Future planning for supply chain management

Representatives from 3sHealth, along with supply chain managers from the health regions and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA), met for a two day workshop January 16 – 17 to discuss the future state of Supply Chain Management in the province.

“These two days were filled with unbelievable spirit and incredible team work, where people worked together to identify some of the opportunities and challenges we face in Supply Chain Management. I am thrilled with everyone’s involvement and the progress that was made over the course of these two days,” 3sHealth Vice President of Business Development, Mark Anderson said.

The visioning event was facilitated by John Black & Associates and had participants discuss the current state of their supply chain in their regions. Some of the common issues that were identified in comparing Supply Chain Management region to region were:

- The use of multiple ordering processes (manual, electronic and fax)
- Products moved several times before they arrived at point of use
- Dealing with vendor requirements for minimum order quantities
- Excess inventory
- Significant variation in geography, distribution and supplies

By recognizing commonalities and differences across the regions, participants were able to explore options that led them closer to an ideal state. Ideas such as central warehousing to support a “milk run” of mixed supplies, just-in-time ordering, standard work and inventory control were discussed. By agreeing on what an ideal state for Supply Chain Management would look like, all participants were able to visualize a plan for the future state of their departments in their own health regions.

The participants worked in teams in order to determine what qualities are feasible in a future state. Common themes among the teams were:

- To combine all of the supplies required for a site into a single transport load, rather than having trucks that are specific to products (eg. linen, med/surg, pharmacy, etc.)
- Standardizing electronic ordering through Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)
- The implementation of a Kanban system (a Japanese term that means signboard, refers to a visual ordering system that streamlines the ordering and supply process using visual cues) throughout the entire process
- Implementing a standard Kanban card
- To create standard bins and bin colours

By paralleling a future state plan with some key areas of work – such as data collection, standardizing of SKU’s, the implementation of a Kanban system – supply chain managers, along with 3sHealth were able to leave the workshop with practical ideas of a more efficient supply chain system.

“Today, we realized that we have some common goals and a common understanding of where we want to go with an improved Supply Chain Management system. We’ve also acknowledged some of the smaller steps we need to take to get there, and we are all leaving here a little more charged to do so,” Heartland Health Region Director of Corporate Services, Katie Haubrich said.