Reducing the number of missing/lost specimens in the lab

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Description

Specimens sent from JDCH nursing units through the tube system were getting lost. Understanding the capabilities of the process was imperative in this project as there were multiple departments who acted as direct suppliers and customers of the process. The current state pointed to specimens not being collected in Soft ID prior to sending it to the lab, specimens not received in the lab, specimens getting lost and/or stuck in the tube system, and mislabeled and/or unlabeled specimens.

AIM

To reduce the number of missing/lost specimens from an average of 6.25 to 0.

Actions Taken

The Fishbone Diagram was utilized to determine root causes that contributed to missing/lost specimens. Improvement efforts included an education plan for nurses, as well as standard work was used to enhance the multi-disciplinary efforts from all departments involved.

In 2016, solutions that were critical-to-quality were implemented to the lab specimens process. Additionally, a hospital-wide plan was developed that targets significant backlogs in the process, including correct use of tube station, correct use of equipment, and what to do in exception cases. As a result, there has been a 71.2% decrease in missing/lost incidents since the project start in April 2016. There is a sustained culture change that is evidenced by nurses, facilities, and leadership to take an active role in bringing awareness to staff, and to also determine the root causes of the incidents that do occur.

Summary of Results

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