Taking Steps Toward Improved Smear Turnaround Times

Denise F. Dunbar
April 24, 2019
Lean Six Sigma Black Belt Project

• Goal: To increase the percentage of smears reported within 24 hours of specimen receipt

• Baseline: Percentage in 24 hours = 67%

• Year One goal percentage = 75%

• Actual percentage achieved = 86%
Simple Lessons_Lean Six Sigma

• Map out your process
• Keep in mind when mapping process:
  • How often and for how long does each specimen sit untouched?
• Smaller batches are more efficient than large batches!
Simple Lessons - Lean Six Sigma

• Tracked specimen deliveries – times and quantities received

• Increased processing runs to 3X/day to match specimen delivery times

• Increased the length of the workday by filling staff vacancies for different shifts – better for morale than changing shifts of existing staff!
To increase percentage further?

- Going after that last batch of Friday evening smears and pre-holiday smears:

  1. Smear fixation studies to reduce wait for smears while heat-fixing

   2. Possible shift changes (on rotating schedule?) to cover Fridays and pre-holidays
Thank you

Denise F. Dunbar
512-776-7342
denise.dunbar@dshs.texas.gov