

## Partners – People – Processes: LEAN Practices for Laboratory Efficiency Improvement in Milwaukee

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*Armed with new quality improvement tools offered by APHL's National Center for Public Health Laboratory Leadership (NCPHLL) and the Laboratory Efficiencies Initiative (LEI), the Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) Laboratory has been busy executing LEAN initiatives such as uncluttering work areas, measuring key performance indicators and streamlining laboratory workflow.*

Each morning, the entire staff meets for five minutes to check in with each other and address issues such as scheduling, equipment maintenance, upcoming departmental events and employee accomplishments. A display board at a central location in the laboratory captures “hot-button” issues and quality improvement success stories.

These huddle meetings ensure that the entire lab is informed on a daily basis about the ongoing issues that may impact work. It better prepares the lab to handle potential interruptions and delays to completing its testing workload.

In addition to daily “huddle meetings,” they used LEAN 5S techniques, which focus on good housekeeping to remove unused equipment, expired supplies and clutter from the laboratory. The lab's first 5S project focused on the conference room.

“Our conference room is the first impression that visitors get of the lab. We knew we had to start here,” says Julie Becker, office assistant.

Led by Owusu-Ofori as part of his APHL-sponsored LEAN Leader certification training, the group first established a system to distinguish trash from treasure. Once staff agreed on this system, they proceeded to recycle outdated journal publications, discard unused equipment, and organize the rest. The conference room project inspired staff to apply 5S techniques to other areas, including the break room and waterborne pathogens laboratory.

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- Sanjib Bhattacharyya, PhD, deputy laboratory director

Then, in November 2013, the NCPHLL LEAN Leaders group came to consult on a project designed to reduce the cost of Gonorrhea-Chlamydia Aptima Combo testing. The group applied Value-Stream Mapping and Root-Cause Analysis tools to reduce the number of steps necessary to accession and load patient samples into the Hologic-GenProbe's Panther platform.



Photo taken in front of MHD's primary visual display board after a huddle meeting. 1st row: Jody Lokken, Dorota Kuehni, Ben Hui, Dave Griswold; 2nd row: Sarah McQuown, Diab Qadah, Norma Avila; 3rd row: Jean Wojnar, Kwadwo Owusu-Ofori, Elizabeth Zembrowski, Julie Becker; 4th row: Lance Presser, Steve Gradus, Brad Krause, Mark Zemke; 5th row: Valdis Kalve, Sanjib Bhattacharyya, Steve Schulteis

“We will definitely build upon this experience to ensure our lab continues to maintain a culture of quality in decades ahead,” said Sanjib Bhattacharyya, PhD, deputy laboratory director.

The MHD Laboratory's LEAN team continued their quality improvement training through the City of Milwaukee's existing partnership with the American Society for Quality (ASQ). With APHL funding, ASQ provided professional training in the basic tools of quality improvement. Several members from the LEAN group completed the training course and exam to become ASQ-Certified Quality Improvement Associates (CQIA).

The LEAN process is an example of a quality improvement practice related to LEI. For more information, visit [www.aphl.org/lei](http://www.aphl.org/lei).

### Newly Released from the Laboratory Efficiencies Initiative

The Laboratory Efficiencies Initiative's (LEI) Annual Report highlights the program's principal achievements in 2013 and designates goals for 2014. All LEI activities were guided by a strategic plan delineating products and tools, planning and leadership, and partnership and outreach.

The newly published *Policy Guide for Public Health Laboratory Test Service Sharing* can help laboratory directors address legal questions about test service sharing. In addition, samples of test service sharing contracts and memoranda of agreement are accessible in the Member Resource Center under the search term “Policy Guide.” The policy guide is a companion tool to *A Practical Guide to Assessing and Planning Implementation of PHL Service Changes*, released in 2012.

The LEI's annual report and policy guide are available at [www.aphl.org/lei](http://www.aphl.org/lei).

