

Lean and Six Sigma

What is it?

Six Sigma focuses on reducing process variation and enhancing process control, while **Lean** drives out waste and promotes work standardization and value stream mapping (what the current mapped process is).

How can you use it?

First you need to understand the tools and methodologies in order to design people- intensive processes of patient care.

A Lean initiative has four main goals:

1. Improve quality – Quality is the ability for your services to meet your customer’s needs. The goal begins with understanding customer expectations and designing processes to meet these expectations.
2. Eliminate waste - Waste is anything that takes up time, resources or space, but is not value added.
3. Reduce lead time – By eliminating lead time, you can respond to customer needs in a timely manner.
4. Reduce total costs – This is reduced by eliminating waste and reducing lead time.

The Six Sigma philosophy includes:

1. Use of teams that are assigned well-defined projects that have direct impact on the organization’s bottom line.
2. Training in “statistical thinking” at all levels. Additional advanced statistics training given to designated individuals.
3. Emphasis on the DMAIC approach to problem solving: Define measure, analyze, improve, and control.
4. A management environment that supports these initiatives as a business strategy.

Things to remember:

1. If the method seems to be getting too complicated, then it probably is, and you should step back to see if you can simplify what you’re trying to study!
2. Most problems can be solved without using designed experiments. If the process is an old established one, and it used to work okay, and then keep asking why it isn’t until you find the problem!
3. Remember the KISS principle: keep it simple (keep it simple statistician or keep it statistically simple)!
4. Sometimes all you need is an updated histogram or flowchart to see the problem!
5. Never give up!
6. Have fun!

Sources: The Certified Six Sigma Greenbelt Handbook; Six Sigma for the Office A Pocket Guide