



5 Productive work flows

Productive environment

Reorganised rooms, Sheffield

Clinicians were surprised to find how much wasted time and distractions were being caused by hunting for information or equipment. The 5S process has saved time and frustration.

The idea

A practice in Sheffield used quality improvement techniques from the Releasing Time Programme to improve the organisation of their work environment.

Using a technique called 5S, they made sure every item had a set place in the room, which was clearly labelled. They also organised the items by how often they used them – regularly used items were in easier reach than those used more rarely.

The practice built in a daily cleaning routine and with the lack of clutter this was much easier to do. They made sure the places they put equipment were standardised across the surgery, for example all consulting rooms had specimen bags in the fifth draw down – easy for people moving rooms. This saves time, and also helps restock easily – if a shelf is labelled for a certain item, but is empty, they know to order more of that item.

“We got rid of everything we didn’t need from the rooms, which turned up some things we couldn’t even remember what they were for” Lead GP

Impact

It has saved time in the consultation because everyone knows where to look, staff no longer have to leave the room to track down missing stock and has made it easier for staff to work in different rooms from where they might work usually. A conservative estimate would be that it saves an average of five minutes per day per working clinician. Therefore estimated 250 hours of clinical time saved a year.

The practice found the exercise fun and developed a sense of productive team working. One or two rooms did not get the 5S treatment on the day, and staff asked to have time to do this at a later date, which has happened.

“This intervention was uniformly appreciated by all staff in our practice, and we are still maintaining the changes, and reaping benefits, with minimal effort.” GP

Implementation tips

Actually measuring how much time is being spent on common tasks often reveals surprisingly simple ways to free up time.

Hunting for things during consultations is not just wasteful, clinicians find it significantly adds to their stress and makes it harder to concentrate on the patient. Look for ways your own work could be adapted, to improve both efficiency and safety.

Link(s)

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www.nhsiq.nhs.uk/capacity-capability/productive-general-practice.aspx