**Implementation ofLean Six Sigma in diagnostic Laboratories with quality standard ISO 15189**

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**Introduction**

Advance diagnostics laboratories have almost replaced manual testing parameter into automated. With high burden of reducing cost with maintaining good quality and turnaround time, Many Clinical laboratories has adapted new approach and modify the procedural system. Laboratory Quality management system is one of the main regulatory systems of accreditation. The accreditation is providing by the government based on their scope of testing. There arerequirements of different actwhich need to be gathered. It is again based on the specialization of laboratory. i.e., ISO 15189 for diagnostics laboratory. Toacquire good quality reports, laboratory needs to emphasize on three important processesof diagnostic laboratory. These are pre-analytical, analytical and post analytical phases. However, the most common error is pre – analytical error.As per ISO 15189, the pre-analytical phase consists ofthe steps starts from the patients request form,patient preparation, collection & transportation of primary specimens to laboratory.

**Laboratory Quality standard (ISO 15189)**

ISO 15189 is an international standard used by diagnostics laboratories to build their quality management systems and to appraise their competence. Laboratory requires this standard document to propose and implementation of actions to focus risks and opportunities. When laboratory involved to addressing both opportunities and risks, it establishesto increase the validity of the quality management system, improvised results, and preventing adverse effects. This document will accelerate collaboration between clinical laboratories and other organization. It also aids in the commute of information and experience and in the cooperation between the standards and procedure. This document provides harmonization between standards and procedure.

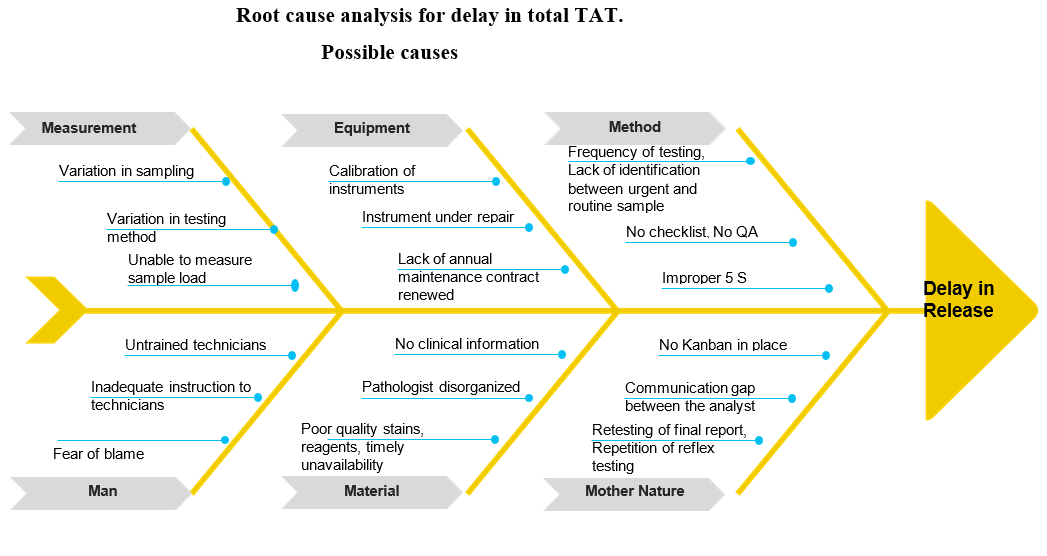


Figure – 1: Possible root cause for delay in repport release in clinical laboratory

**Tools and Techniquesof Lean Six Sigma**

The decision of Lean Six Sigma tools and techniques relay on the following:

* Service type/ processes
* Depend on used of approach (DMAIC / DMADV)
* Behaviour of Data (Quantitative/ Qualitative)
* Based on employee’s learning and competency level, which will help to understand and implementation.

Most widely used approach is DMAIC, which stands for Define, Measure, Analyse, and Improve& Control while DMADV means Define, Measure, Analyse, Design & Verify. Theimplementation ofDMAIC methodology when a process or results is in existence in an organisation but it not matching with consumer specification.

Based on Laboratory case, the below factors can take into consideration in selection and implementation of Six Sigma techniques.

* DMAIC Approach
* Behaviour of Data: qualitative and quantitative
* Education and competency level of employee
* Adaptability with the ISO 15189

**Implementation of Lean Six sigma in diagnostics laboratories with ISO 15189 standard**

To justify the motive of this chapter which mentioned objective – Implementation of Lean Six sigma in diagnostics laboratories with standard. Some important aspect needs to be aware of the below requirements:

A. ISO 15189 standard specific clause requirements for quality improvement & control of processes: The clauses:

1. The clauses 5.5 which is highlighting the Ensuring the validity of test results,

2. The clauses 4.9 which includes Complaints and

3. The clauses4.13 which includes non-conforming work.

All these clauses are like the quality control and improvement procedure. Also, these three clauses are very important and fundamental for accreditation of clinical laboratories.

B. One typical clause (4.15.2) says “Data from observation activities shouldanalyzed periodically, used as a control and to improve the laboratory's procedure. If the results of the data analysis from observed activities are found to be out of pre-defined factor, appropriate action shall be taken to avoid erroneous results from being reported.” This requirement allows the laboratories to implement the tools for quality improvement which needed for better performance achievement and this study proves worth.

C. Diagnostics laboratory process needs: Majority of thediagnostics laboratories carry out the procedure either by instrumental or through wet laboratory procedure and sometimes combination of both.

**Lean Microbiology:**

In today’s world of health care, the clinical laboratory is position of aggressively change of new disease, new technologies, new health care delivery techniques, a changing work area, economical pressure, and evolving reimbursement combine to challenge the; laboratory in ways that were unimaginable even decades ago. Lean management procedure within the clinical microbiology laboratory can help to focus these challenges both today and in future.

**Examples of Lean initiatives:**

Microbiology laboratory involves the integration of pre and post analytical processes through combination of multiple, modular systems to perform different tests which involvesmanual plating, incubation, analyzing and processing of specimens. Through minimal manual processing of specimen, standardization can be established to reduce the human error. Implementation of Lean techniques especially 5 S helps to enhance improve quality of microbiological workflow including enhanced microbial growth, better colony isolation, reduced need of bacterial subculture, and reduced time to result.

Process involved and improvements:

1. Review of SOPS
2. Staff education
3. Streamlined culture reading with standardized follow-up protocol
4. A pending of specimen’s process at end of second shift by assessment and plating for expansion to 16 hours’ operation. So, technologist significantly reduce the extend of the backlog without higher management authority intervention or the need of additional staffing. They were able to accomplish this by identify key barriers in specimen processing time and its peak hours for specimen receiving.
5. To apply on First –in, first- out approach to specimen processing andassociated with other department to reduce batch sizes of samples through more frequent specimen pickups.
6. Application of evidence-based decision making, which is core concept of Lean. When resources are limited, the natural tendency is to provide a simple fix to a problem.
7. Standardization of work process by standard work document to visual aid and for analyzing and reporting of different specimen types.
8. Physical redesigned of work benches including storage and clear labelling of all items. By standardizing each workstation, there was reduced room for error and reduce time for search of reagents and materials.
9. Kanban used for inventory management of laboratory resources allowed for reduced need for extra storage space and waste due to unnecessary inventory by more usage pattern and ordering.
10. Routine analysis over time allowed the department to adjust the timing of negative-preliminary results reporting to reduce the number of amended reports.
11. Despite multiple use of PDCA cycle, all microbiological sample’s culture reports like pus, urine, blood, respiratory, fluids, no improvements were noted. So as a part of process of continuous improvement, all culture reports were started released in form of preliminary and final. This approach immediately shortens TATs (Turnaround time) of report.
12. Most challenging part in microbiology lab. was staff motivation. That had been improved by conducting individual opportunity to demonstrate their organization skill.

**Conclusion**

This chapter is an endeavour to understand the key parameter of applicationof Lean Six sigma in the clinical laboratories. Implementation of Lean Six sigma in the Laboratory Qualitystandard (ISO 15189), the important results are,

1. Identify and application ofproper Lean Six sigma tools and techniques like the clinical laboratory.
2. Selection suitable DMAIC method.
3. To understand the importance of Lean Six sigma in quality control management& improvement of the diagnostics laboratory.
4. Develop framework of Lean Six sigma along with the method and tools & techniques which would be appropriate to the Laboratory standard (ISO 15189) collaboration.

So Lean practice within diagnostics laboratory & in Microbiology testing can help to attend many challenges for today and for future.

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