Driving A Culture of Quality Improvement: The Kaizen Everyday Engagement Programme (KEEP) Journey

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Background

“Kaizen” is a lean principle governing rapid incremental improvements to eliminate waste, create better workflow, improve safety and increase productivity.

In January 2015, CGH embarked on developing and implementing the Kaizen Everyday Engagement Programme (KEEP) to drive daily quality improvement (QI) on the ground.

Aim

In 2014, CGH unveiled its new Vision, “To be a caring hospital trusted by patients and staff, renowned for clinical excellence and innovation”. Together with this new vision, CGH also refreshed its core values, namely Teamwork, Ownership, and Professionalism (TOP). In line with these aspirations, KEEP, a “visual QI system” was created to facilitate idea generation, implementation, standardization and spread at the ground level.

Solution Approach

With Nursing colleagues as pioneer partners, the programme charter was created and a team was formed with KEEP champions identified as well. There were extensive reviews, collaboration and communication with key stakeholders and champions to jointly design and develop the comprehensive KEEP programme which comprised of 5 key elements namely:

1. KEEP Workflow
A simple, visual, and easy to follow workflow was established to facilitate staff understanding of the KEEP programme and to aid in implementation.

2. Infrastructure
The QI thinking process and documentation were made simpler by designing a “kaizen form” to fit in a single piece of paper. Using a “kaizen mission control board” or simply “kaizen board” in each unit, every staff has the visibility on how their ideas are progressing from being just an idea to a fully implemented improvement. A kaizen tracking sheet was also developed to facilitate measurement of staff engagement in kaizen and to assist leaders to identify units needing coaching and support.

3. Training
A one-day “Everyday Improver Course” was developed by OIS in 2016 to equip staff with basic QI methodology, tools and understanding of the KEEP programme. The course was later incorporated into HR’s competency roadmap to provide basic QI competency for all staff.

4. Support and Governance
A KEEP governance team was also established to facilitate oversight and adherence of kaizen implementations on the ground to align with patient safety standards and CGH policies.

5. Recognition
The annual CGH KEEP Award was initiated in 2015 to recognise units or departments which demonstrated excellent performance and commitment to improvement through their unit-level kaizen solutions.

Results

From FY2014 to FY2018, a total of 1,191 kaizen ideas from almost 80 departments and units across CGH were generated and implemented. About 53% of the overall kaizen improvements were improvements to optimise use of staff time and capabilities and 26% on improving patient safety. These improvements translated to an average annualised increase in productivity of almost 194,700 hours (which refers to staff time being released back to patient care).

After its inception in Nursing, similar efforts were initiated to implement KEEP in the Allied Health, Finance Department and Operations Divisions. To date, it has reached out to over 4,000 hospital staff (more than 80% of CGH’s total staff strength).

In 2016, KEEP was awarded Singapore’s PS21 Excellence in Public Service Award for Best Practice for Organisational Development. This national award recognised the excellent organisational development strategy adopted by CGH in introducing a culture of continuous quality improvement via KEEP. CGH was also privileged to be the only public hospital invited by Singapore’s Public Service Division together with other government agencies to showcase KEEP as one of the featured initiatives at the Public Service Conference 2016 with the theme “The Future of Public Service”.

Another key milestone of the programme was when KEEP was endorsed by SingHealth Cluster’s Institute of Patient Safety and Quality (IPSQ) as one of the effective teaching initiatives for an engaged & motivated workforce within SingHealth, the biggest healthcare system in Singapore comprising a network of acute hospitals, community hospitals and polyclinics. Following a few rounds of workshops and training sessions provided by CGH, the KEEP approach was progressively adopted by other SingHealth institutions since 2016.

Conclusion

KEEP has served as an active engagement platform for ground staff to get involved proactively in quality improvement on a daily basis. By providing them an end-to-end system that facilitates team-based idea generation and implementation, to the spread of best practice and recognition, the staff now feels that they are empowered to make a difference and are given ownership of their work – all to make CGH a better and safer place for patients and staff.

As patient care and service delivery become more complex and demanding, KEEP is proven to be “crucial” in continuously empowering CGH staff in quality improvement as the organization strives for more efficient and safer care for patients and healthcare workers, based on the motto “Let’s KEEP improving”.

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References:
CGH, Keep Kaizen Form. CGH, Keep Governance Team.
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