

Mark Graban, the author of Lean Hospitals and Senior Fellow at the Lean Enterprise Institute, had some positive comments about Pat Hagan's Washington Post article and the work he has seen here this summer on leanblog.org – more below.

Executive from Seattle Children's on Lean Healthcare in the Washington Post

<http://www.leanblog.org/2009/10/executive-from-seattle-childrens-on.html>

[Patrick Hagan: Waste Not, Want Not: The Key to Reducing Costs - washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

Here is an outstanding piece from the President & Chief Operating Officer of Seattle Children's Hospital, [Pat Hagan](#). Coincidentally, I just recorded a podcast today with [Joan Wellman](#), a Lean healthcare consultant who helped get them going on their journey.

I had a chance to visit Seattle Children's earlier this summer and I was very impressed with what I saw and heard. This is the real deal, one of the top Lean hospitals in the U.S., if not the world. It's great that one of their leaders would help spread the word about healthcare process improvement during all of this debate about insurance reform.

The results that Hagan cites from Seattle Children's are impressive, including:

"Patient days on ventilators have been safely reduced by 26 percent" (which reduces risks of infection)

Saving \$2.5 million on supplies in the first year alone

"Reduced cardiac surgical site infections and hospital-acquired blood stream infection rates by 50 percent in just three years"

"Seattle Children's has reduced direct per-patient costs by 3.7 percent"

In his piece, Hagan references Toyota and a number of Lean management methods, including:

Standardized work

Error proofing

Visual management

He perfectly sums up the idea that Lean concepts are easy to understand, but hard to instill into an organization:

“These results came from standardizing the way dressings are changed, central lines are managed and medication is administered. Simple, straightforward and very hard work. ”

The management side -- the discipline and attention that's required, the leadership that's involved... that's much tougher than just putting tools in place. Seattle Children's has been working at this for more than ten years -- very impressive.

As always, the reader comments (now closed) are interesting. There's the usual mix of praise for ThedaCare (from one reader who is a patient there), political shouting, a comment that people shouldn't be treated like car bumpers, and a final question asking how Hagan could claim 95% of healthcare activity is waste but they only reduced 3.7% of cost.

I think there's a difference between "activity" and "cost"

A good deal of the "waste" is required in the current system and can't be eliminated

I think 95% is a very high estimate. That's the only thing I could take issue with in the piece. Dr. Don Berwick from IHI says 30 to 40% of what we do in healthcare is waste. I've heard others say 30 to 50%. 95% of the time in some processes (as percent of cycle time, length of stay, or turnaround time) is waste, but not necessarily 95% of the hospital's labor activity (including management and overhead).