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Patient-centered lean in healthcare superseding industry's narrow efficiency focus

This presentation calls for healthcare to turn away from manufacturing's dominant lean emphasis, and do it its own, *better*, way. Because of the distance from end customers in the industrial sector (where few people ever see a real customer), its typical focus is inward—on operational efficiency through waste elimination. The nature of healthcare—with customers up close and immediate—calls for elevating lean's efforts toward customer-focused *effectiveness*: flexibly quick, “queue-less” response along the multiple flow paths leading to and involving patients. (Waste elimination, though a valued methodology easily taught and beneficially used by work forces, should be seen as ancillary to the greater purpose.) A case study in which widely scattered heart-attack patients were transported to a central treatment hospital in a system-wide, highly coordinated program of quick response, is illustrative. This presentation will show that the keys to lean *effectiveness* in healthcare—including high rates of saving lives—boil down to just a few key methodologies, each focused on quick response and patient safety. Lean healthcare, when practiced in this way, draws in and can retain (usually weak) executive support, fostering status as a fixture in strategic management of the enterprise.

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