A “Lean” project to streamline the workflow and enhance communication between Endoscopy Unit and Wards

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Introduction
In preparing patients to the Endoscopy Unit for investigational or therapeutic procedures; frequent and multiple phone calls between the Unit and ward for the details of the patient and preparations for the relevant procedure always inducing different levels of unnecessary delay of the workflow; and thus lowering the overall efficiencies in both parties. In view of this, a workgroup which comprised of all the concerned stakeholders was formed to review the relevant areas and plan for improvement actions of the workflow.

Objectives
The key objective of the project was to streamline the relevant workflow and enhance the communication between the concerned parties and stakeholders. Final expected outcome of the project was to reduce the relevant communication phone calls between the Endoscopy Unit and ward to “one only” for each scheduled procedure in the Unit.

Methodology
The “Lean Management” concept was applied in this project. In over 3 weeks of information collection, the concerned areas and enquired information of each relevant phone call was recorded. By grouping the collected information, a few common items which were always communicated in the majority of phone calls were identified. Then, a meeting was held with all the stakeholders to discuss and review the situation, relevant information and workflows. With different suggestions from workgroup members discussed, a proposal to reduce the multiple phone calls to only “one call” from Endoscopy Unit to concerned ward was worked out. To facilitate the implementation of the “single-call-only” proposal, a simple checklist which including all the identified common enquired items of phone calls was worked out by the
Result
Finally, all members agreed a designate time on each scheduled procedure day for sending the completed simple checklist by fax from the wards to Endoscopy Unit. It is to confirm the necessary preparations of patient are completed. With the confirmed information, staff members of Endoscopy Unit will make only one call to inform the ward staff member of the time for transfer the patient from ward to the unit. The plan would be piloted in all the involved parties for a month. In the initial week of the pilot, significant reduction of phone calls was achieved. Then, it will be further evaluated and appropriate fine-tune or modifications of the workflow will be made accordingly.