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Report finds Lean Six Sigma has reduced health care costs

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Posted Aug 04, 2011 @ 11:54 AM

Rochester —
A new report released by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation and the Rochester Business Alliance this week says that offering a business model for efficiency helps success in reducing health care costs.

"The Process Prescription: How the business community is helping local health care providers to improve efficiency" suggests health companies should apply Lean Six Sigma, which has saved millions of dollars, shortened emergency room waits and improved patient outcomes.

According to the report, an estimated $15.8 million was saved by its three hospitals, a health center and a long-term facility that used this model.

Results showed a reduction in the time patients entering the Rochester General Hospitals emergency room and needing to be transferred to the intensive care unit from six hours to 90 minutes; shortened stays for pneumonia patients at Unity Health System; an increased capacity to see patients at Anthony Jordan Health Center; reduced infection rates at the University of Rochester Medical Center; and a reduction of medication dispensing errors by 64 percent at St. Ann's Community.

"These results are solid," said John Urban, president of the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, which provided $1 million in grants for the Lean Six Sigma project. "They exceeded what we hoped for, and the concept of Lean Six Sigma has moved from being a special project to something thats applied into the daily operations of these institutions."

The report is the result of a collaboration begun in 2005 that has also included work on increasing employee participation in wellness programs, increasing use of generic drugs where appropriate and establishing the Greater Rochester Regional Health Information Organization, which is working to create and connect a system of electronic medical records.