

## Yellowbelt Profile: Debbie Fabry

A Value Institute Learning Center Publication



Debbie Fabry has been the Nurse Manager of the Pain Clinic at Dartmouth Hitchcock since August 2015. She recently completed her first Yellowbelt project that sought to improve, organize, and reduce waste in procedure rooms.

Debbie has been a Registered Nurse for 26 years. Prior to coming to Dartmouth-Hitchcock, she worked for the

Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP). There, she was the Director of Nursing at the Barbara McInnis House, a 104-bed inpatient facility that provides 24-hour skilled nursing care for homeless men and women in the city of Boston. Other notable professional experiences include working for GlaxoSmithKline, participating in a medical mission to Haiti, and working in home care.

Debbie's first experience in process improvement was shortly after she was hired by BHCHP. The McInnis House employed more than 60 nurses but did not have a structured orientation. Instead, orientation was largely a "learn by doing" process. Debbie recruited a small team of clinical nurses who committed four months to collaborate on the development of a structured orientation schedule. Their work culminated with a weekend retreat in Vermont where they finalized the schedule and celebrated their hard work.

After her recent Yellowbelt training, Debbie emphasized how much she enjoyed spending time with colleagues from the Pain Clinic as well as learning ways to contribute to a more satisfying work environment that provides a better patient experience. She also enjoyed networking with leaders from other departments and meeting members of the Value Institute Learning Center (VILC).

When reflecting on the experience, Debbie thought the most useful message of the training was how decreasing variation and standardizing processes contributes to increased efficiency. With this in mind, she set out to find opportunities to improve, organize, and reduce waste in the procedure rooms of the Pain Clinic using the "5S system", a 5-step organization technique used to create and maintain an intuitive workspace. "Attention to the physical environment in preparation for an Omnicell installation revealed concern. A pre-5S audit resulted with a score of 41, or "concern, minimal effort." Obsolete or unused equipment was stored in dusty corners, drawers were filled to capacity, and excess stock hid older stock that became outdated before use and took up valuable space that was needed for other supplies," says Debbie. Some of the project improvements included adjusting the par levels, removing rarely used equipment, and some supply items from the par level alto-

gether. A post-5S audit resulted with a score of 110, "on target—good work." Debbie notes that the improvements made as part of the 5S project have been sustained and have made preparing for the Joint Commission and CMS surveys relatively effortless. "As a matter of fact, the JC and CMS were both complimentary regarding the organization and standardization seen in the procedure rooms," she says.

Overall, Debbie says this was an excellent team building exercise, and staff from many areas, clinical and nonclinical, were involved. She notes that there were some skeptics at first who were not convinced about the efficacy of certain standardization mechanisms. Involving them in the project, but getting them to "buy into" the idea was very important to the ultimate success of the project. Another difficulty she experienced concerned inventory and logistics, because the project led to adjusted par levels for numerous supply items. Communicating these necessary changes led to some tension, but once Debbie and her team were able to explain how the new par levels were part of an improvement plan, there was more collective understanding and cooperation.

Debbie credits her leadership for being fully supportive and allowing the blocking of schedules so that a nurse, physician, secretary, and manager could participate. She also says that the team's VILC leader, Vicky Adams, was extremely helpful in guiding them through the process. "Debbie and the 5S team in the Pain clinic were willing get their hands dirty during the 5S event. With prompting from Debbie asking the right questions, the team sorted unused items and experimented with rearranging the space in multiple configurations. They simulated working in the different configurations to determine what would and wouldn't work, until they came up with a solution that worked for patients and staff. It was great to have nurses and doctors working through the process side by side. Debbie brought the right people together to create a successful solution," adds Vicky.

Looking forward, Debbie says, "The Pain Clinic is poised for growth and to do so, we will likely need additional staff and additional space. We are currently in the middle of two value stream mappings: one in the Pain Clinic and the other in our procedural area. We're hoping that the data we collect will confirm our claim that we are already operating as efficiently as possible and that the only way to be more productive will be to expand our space and staff." Additionally, Debbie and three of her Pain Clinic colleagues, are enrolled in the year-long Conaty Leadership Program that concludes with a Capstone Project. Although they have not yet zeroed in on a project, they are looking forward to applying the knowledge and skills gained through Yellowbelt training to improve their processes.