

The healthcare industry is changing. From new technology to the Affordable Care Act, **hospitals must adjust to new standards and expectations.**

"Ultimately, healthcare is changing quickly, in a way that is challenging for hospitals," Andréa Bunnitt said. "They're having to figure out innovative ways to deliver higher quality care at a lower cost. Even as a non-profit organization, without a margin you don't have the means to support your mission."

Because of the new federal regulations, hospitals are making less money. The changes challenge hospital staff to adjust their outlooks on traditional healthcare.

"Inpatient stays and ER visits are expensive for both patients and hospitals," she said. **"The goal is to engage patients in their health, through primary care and preventative maintenance, and help make sure patients are being seen in the appropriate healthcare setting."**

Bunnitt is the lean facilitator in oncology at Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma City. Lean management, as she describes it, is a type of organizational operating system, based on lean six sigma. Six sigma is a disciplined, data-driven approach and methodology for eliminating defects (driving toward six standard deviations between the mean and the nearest specification limit) in any process. Basically, it's a focus on continuous improvement.

"Oncology is an area in healthcare that is growing," she said. "How do we make sure we as a service line, are operating in the most efficient way possible and providing the most value for our patients? My job is to help us look at our services, and the value stream as a whole, and identify inefficiencies and opportunities for improvement with the help of our frontline co-workers."

She was the first lean facilitator in the more than 30 hospitals associated with Mercy Hospital when she started in 2013. Since then, the hospital system, referred to as a "ministry," has employed multiple lean facilitators. Lean management and principles have become an integral part of Mercy Hospital operations. According to Bunnitt, the leadership within Mercy "see it as a very pivotal part of transitioning into the future of healthcare."

"[My leadership role] started when I was a resident," Bunnitt said. "I was on the steering committee for the new cancer center, so I was involved in outlining the goals, determining the vision statement and matching it to the business case."

Much of her work is preparation for the hospital's new cancer center, which is set to open in early 2016.

"A lot of what I'm doing now is working through processes and seeing how those processes need to be adjusted for the new cancer center," she said. "It's a lot of planning, a lot of talking with co-workers, patients and physicians, and getting their input. We want to make sure we're building the comprehensive cancer center that we outlined when we first began the project."

Bunnitt became involved in planning for the new cancer center when she was still a resident at the hospital, a residency acquired through the Baylor MBA Healthcare Program. Unlike many healthcare administration MBA programs, the Robbins Institute's MBA Healthcare Program requires a seven-month paid executive residency with a leading, progressive health organization.

While a resident, Bunnitt was exposed to everything from babies being born to demolishing a room to high-level, C-suite meetings. Thanks to that extensive understanding of the hospital's operations at every level, she is more prepared for her current position.

"It really helps me now because my job is to look at things from a value-stream perspective," she said. "I spent time with a director, manager and frontline co-worker in every department. **Knowing what everyone's roles are, and the challenges and expectations each face, helps me work through processes within the oncology service line.**"

Bunnitt loves hearing about new opportunities for improvement and being faced with new challenges. From her undergraduate years at Baylor to working as a lean facilitator, she has consistently shown a passion for working with people.

"I like to think whatever I'm doing is positively affecting someone else," she said. "That's one of the reasons I enjoyed being involved at Baylor and in the Waco community. Likewise, healthcare is about helping others when they are most vulnerable, and my job is to help optimize our processes, so we can best serve our patients and community."

ANDRÉA Bunnitt

LEAN FACILITATOR, ONCOLOGY
MERCY HOSPITAL
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA
BBA '11 MBA HEALTHCARE '13

