Ten Terrible Trashes (TTT) in Healthcare Industry

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It is a common belief that up to 80% of the activities carried out in most of the organizations do not add value to its customers! Most of our time goes into searching, postmortems, re-works, repairs etc. Such activities certainly do not result in any value addition to the Customer (i.e., the Patient). To me, value added activities are only those for which a Customer is willing to pay. Customer is no longer excited if a Healthcare Service Provider provides just the health related attention. Customer's appetite for 'higher value' makes it imperative to do things right first time and also every time. This means that we cannot afford to have any wasteful activities in what we provide to the Customers.

What is Value?

Any activity related to something that the customer wants basically adds value. The customer would be willing to pay for it. It is an activity that is done right first time & after that, every time. All other activities really do not add value. However, some of this may have to be carried out because of business requirements. Thus, the rest are pure wastes. By identifying and eliminating such wasteful activities, a Healthcare Service Provider not only increases value but also brings down the cost.

Business Requirements are those activities that are required by law, statute or contract. Such activities may be outside the control of the Hospital and must be complied with. For example, Health and Safety, Data Protection, Consumer Credit Act etc. Few other activities may be required to keep the Hospital running. Examples: Recruitment, Training, Ambulance Maintenance etc.

Pure Wastes are those activities that consume resources (time, materials, and money) but create no value.

Pure Wastes include [among other activities]:
- ✓ Rework of any kind
- ✓ Unnecessary layers of approval
- ✓ Creation of reports that never get read
- ✓ Non-productive meetings

Any activity categorized as "Pure Waste" is a prime candidate for elimination.

Wastes: The following 10 are the major waste types in an Office Environment and that an attempt to reduce or eliminate these will add great value to the Customer:

1. **Delivery:** This refers primarily to the movement of medicine or documents across stores, wards or departments.

    Examples: Medication errors, sending medicines for confirmation, incomplete or inaccurate records provided to Doctors / Medical Superintendents for signature / advice and such errorslead to the return of the documents for re-processing. Delay in disposing off wastes is another illustration.

2. **Inventory:** This occurs as result of not taking actions in time.

Examples: Too much of stocks in the ward or in the patient's room, drawing or keeping blood samples, idle wheel chairs, unused equipment, computer hardware, consumables, too much bedside equipment etc., exclusive lift for the movement of Doctors or hospital staff and re-printed forms.

3. **Unnecessary Movement / Motion:** This most common problem almost everywhere and refers to the movement of people or medicines inside the hospital.
For Example, poorly designed office where in the staff have to walk from HUC (Hospital Unit Clerk) Station to the medical room to the patient room or ward, walk to another building to the nearest printer or hunting& gathering materials and equipment and navigating through EMR (Electronic Medical Records).

4. **Waiting time or delays:** Hospital Staff waiting around for the next action or for approvals is a good illustration for this.

Other examples include Patients / staff waiting at lift or for the catering person, Patients waiting at the Emergency Department (ED) or at the Lab. Clinic wait rooms, Clinic exam rooms and delay in discharge; waiting for medicines etc. are other examples.

5. **Over creation:** Put simply, this is nothing but doing things that are not required right now or not required at all. Creating too soon is another specimen.
Other examples are: Getting ready for a surgery though there is no instruction, stocking items though not required at the Operation Theatre (OT), preparing Reports that are not required or not read by anybody, delayed discharges but the patient has already moved out of the room / ward, making a meal that the patient does not eat, urinary catheter staying in too long, creating Services that you cannot sell etc.

6. **Over-Processing:** A good instance for this is doing more work than desired by the customer or the Doctor.
Other examples: Asking patients to come to clinic unnecessarily, putting patients on telemetry just in case, carrying out unnecessary tests, diagnostics or therapies, sending reports that Superintendent/Manager has not asked, having to enter the same data multiple times and providing lengthy descriptions in records though not essential.

7. **Defects:** Imagine the effort & the time squandered when the "things" that you create are wrong or faulty.
Examples: Readying the wrong rooms, errors in arranging for the right medicines, mistakes in a document, erroneous price in a Procurement Order, a system incorrectly installed, duplicate MRNs / SRNs, correct Labs not ordered and misdiagnoses.

8. **Quality Audits:** Auditing or checking documents before these are sent to the Doctor or Patient or Supplier does not really add any value.

Prevention is certainly better than cure! Thus, it is better not to make mistakes in the first case!! Store Audits, re-checking of documents or verifying of stocks, compliance audits etc. really do not add value. Audits have become imperative because of the human errors.

9. **Idling of Talented Manpower:** This perhaps is the greatest failure and "waste". Not knowing the existence of smart & experienced human resources in the organization or underestimating the potential & creativity of the work-force or not knowing their potential and losing them to competition or not listening to their ideas.

10. **Meetings/Calls:** Meetings or calls conducted especially to investigate what went wrong are perhaps the greatest waste.

Most of the meetings/calls are really speaking postmortems!! Inquests into what went wrong in the administration area do not really add value to a Customer who is at your premises for healthcare related solutions.

Certainly some or all of these might be happening right now in your work area. I am sure you, your team and most importantly the Customers (i.e., patients) will be elated if you eliminate these wastes and save money for them as well as for your own Organization.

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