

Greenbelt Profile: Ella Damiano

A Value Institute Learning Center Publication



Ella Damiano, Obstetrics and Gynecology resident at D-H Lebanon, recently completed a Greenbelt project that sought to develop a streamlined process to provide feedback on processes and outcomes measured to Obstetrical providers at D-H Lebanon. Previously, Ella completed the Yellowbelt training with a project examining continuity of care for prenatal patients at D-H Lebanon.

Ella first became interested in process improvement through QA-protected Call Review meetings as an EMT during high school and college. She realized reviewing past errors, as well as acknowledging room for improvement, even when the situation resulted in a “good” outcome, was an important professional duty for those taking care of patients. Before medical school, Ella worked in patient safety and quality improvement in a simulation lab where her work introduced her to the concepts of high reliability organizations and a culture of continuous improvement. She is now in her third year of training in OBGYN at D-H, and has one year remaining to complete residency training.

“I was grateful for the opportunity to focus on one goal for five days – to learn the Greenbelt content,” Ella says of her Greenbelt experience. She notes this was a significant change from her day-to-day work schedule, constantly multi-tasking and trying to implement process improvements when she has time. Ella says the Greenbelt training taught her to trust the DMAIC process to guide her to the root cause of a problem. “I think that in many projects, the participants jump to the solution without examining the problem in enough depth. The DMAIC process requires the team to spend significant amounts of time defining the problem and measuring the current state before making changes,” she says.

Ella chose to focus her project around developing a process to provide feedback on processes and outcomes measured to OB providers at DH. Currently, there is no system for providers to gather individual or team data on their outcomes in order to compare their performance to peers or to national benchmarks and standards. Originally, Ella wanted this information for herself, but soon realized that many providers were also interested in having access to this data too.

Ella explains, “The project has mostly focused on identifying which metrics we should measure and determining how to use the Electronic Medical Records (EMR) to provide that information. At this time, we have been able to retrospectively gather data from 2017 and create control charts. We also have a prototype dashboard for prenatal care. Ongoing work will be necessary to add 2018 to the control charts every month and to refine the dashboard.”

According to Ella, one successful aspect of the project was the department’s willingness to adopt change, including using

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new patient lists. A challenge that she encountered was working within the limitations of EMR, which necessitated much support from the Analytics department. Ella also says that she was lucky to have the support of her Residency Program Director to complete the Greenbelt class. “I was able to use my elective month to complete this project on a fast timeline due to the support of my Blackbelt coach and the willingness of the team members,” she says. Paul Christman, Ella’s Blackbelt coach adds “Ultimately Ella’s passion is to improve outcomes and experiences for patients. She has done this by looking at the big picture and has dissected this big picture into areas that could benefit from improving the process. The openness she has for delving into all areas has paid huge rewards for her team.”

Ella is currently working on her second project using the DMAIC framework. The project, called Gynecology Trans Healthcare Pathway, focuses on improving TransCare in the Gynecology clinic at D-H, specifically those who are assigned female at birth, such as transgender men and gender non-binary individuals. The team is examining the entire process of care from received referrals, to the environment of the waiting room, to providing surgical services. “Once introduced to the DMAIC framework tools, it’s hard to get through a day of work without noticing areas for improvement” Ella says. “I see myself using them consistently for the rest of my career.”