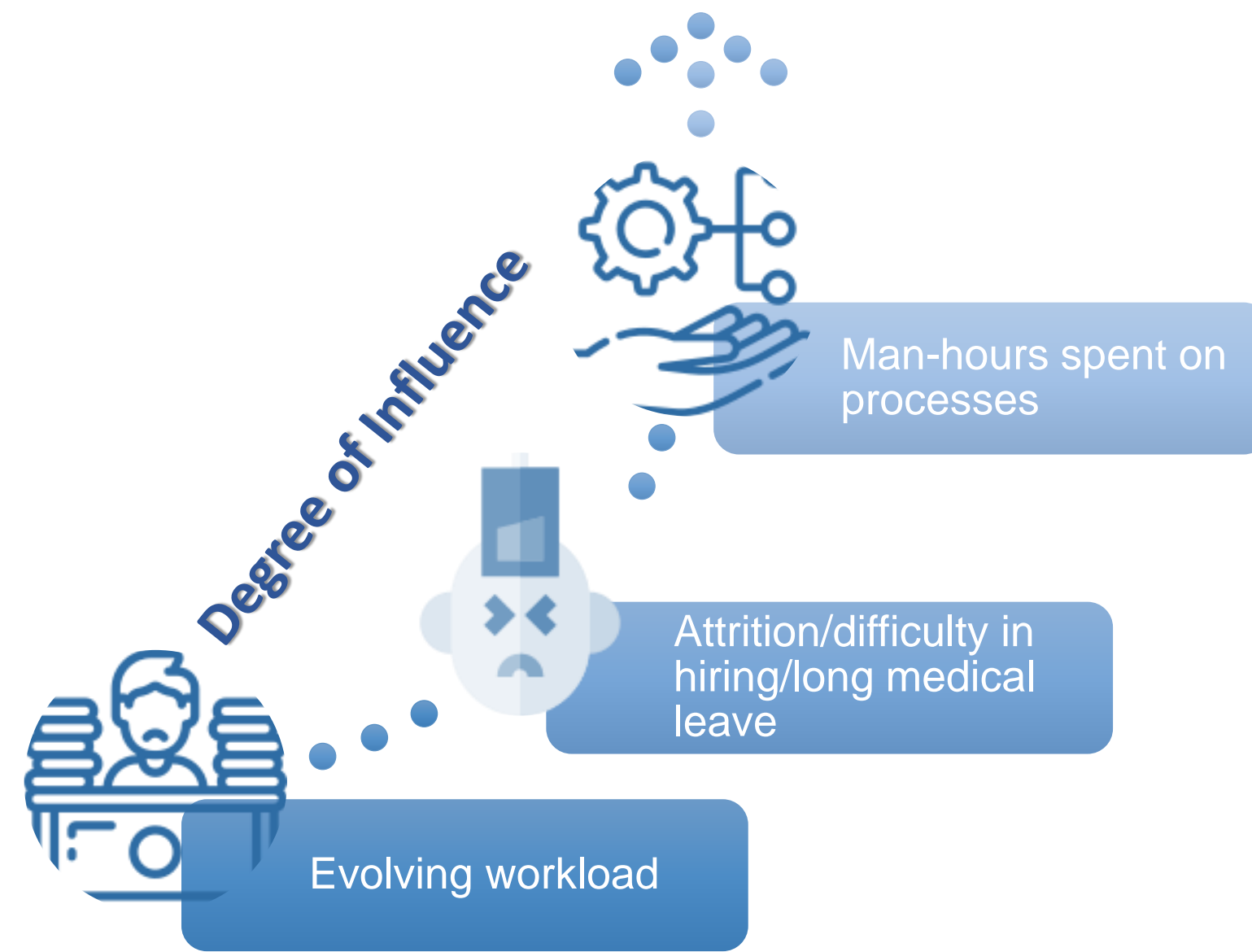


## INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented us with new challenges and uncertainties. The low staffing levels and difficulty in hiring have prompted us to brainstorm on novel ways to **reinstat**e the balance between **workload and staffing**. We reviewed our sphere of influence and decided to focus on areas that we can exert a greater influence on – **reduction of man-hours spent on work processes**.

## OBJECTIVES

To streamline processes in Emergency Pharmacy (EP) and Inpatient Pharmacy Automation Service (IPAS) with the ultimate goal in **reduction in man-hours** so that staff can focus on the delivery of patient care.

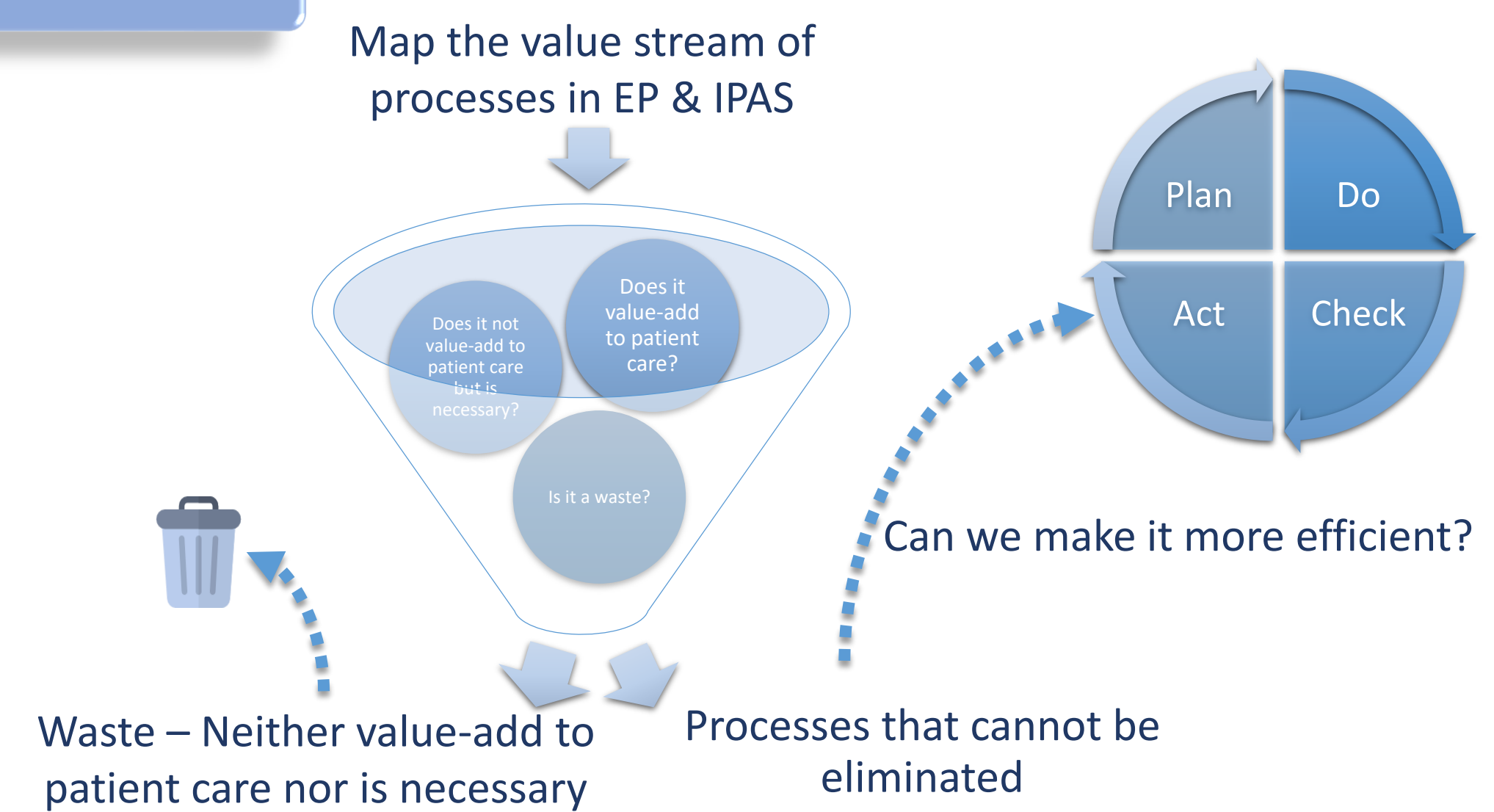


## METHODOLOGY

Existing processes in EP and IPAS were analyzed for **redundancy** and **improvement** using Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) and Lean Thinking methodologies<sup>1</sup>.

Pre- and post-intervention time studies were conducted to determine the savings in man-hours.

Numerous opportunities were identified for improvement and currently available resources were leveraged as far as possible.



## RESULTS

### 1. Triage of Phone Counselling of Medications for Patients under Isolation

**BEFORE** Phone counselling of medications for ALL patients under isolation (PUI).

**AFTER** PUI with **COMPLICATED** medications vs PUI with **SIMPLE** medications. Provide leaflet with drug information, allergy status, weight and contact information for enquiries.

**Figure 1:** An example of leaflet passed to PUI with simple medications.

**Figure 2:** Phone counselling load decreased by 72% after triaging phone counselling of medications for PUI.

**For the month post-intervention, 72% ↓ in phone counselling! 184.8 man-hours saved!**

### 2. Tracking of Phone Counselling Replaced with Issuance of New Queue Series

**BEFORE** Queue series were issued based on clinic locations even if they are PUI. Staff spends an average of 30 seconds to fill up one phone counselling record in tracking form. Tracking could not be eliminated.

**AFTER** Many fields in the tracking form were of little value → **Removed!** **New queue series** was created using our current queue management system to facilitate tracking instead.

**20.7 man-hours saved monthly!**

### 3. Removal of Manual Counting of Prescriptions

**BEFORE** Staff spends an average of 30 minutes a day **counting** prescriptions to tabulate workload from each service.

**AFTER** Staff **DO NOT** need to perform **manual counting** daily. Staff import data from queue management system into pre-formulated template monthly.

**14 man-hours saved monthly!**

### 4. Substitution of Manual Recording of Drug Returns with Photo taking

**BEFORE** Staff spends an average of 1.5 minutes to record 10 drugs on drug returns form.

**AFTER** Staff spends an average of 7 seconds to **capture and upload** 10 drug returns in a dedicated muted secure chat group.

**Figure 3:** An example of capturing drug returns and uploading in a dedicated secure chat group.

**4.3 man-hours saved monthly!**  
↓ Paper waste!  
↑ Ease of investigating inventory discrepancies!

### 5. Utilization of SharePoint Views to Streamline Ward Stock Changes

**BEFORE** Changes in ward stock → Staff update in SharePoint for nurses to order → Staff update summary Excel Database → Staff update Excel topping up form → Staff print topping up form weekly.

**AFTER** Changes in ward stock → Staff update in SharePoint for nurses to order → SharePoint views auto-populate summary database and topping up form → Staff print topping up form from SharePoint directly.

**Figure 4:** An example of SharePoint View.

**4.2 man-hours saved monthly!**

### 6. Pre-formulated PivotTable for Drug Costing

**BEFORE** Stock adjust in billing system/record drips in tracking form. **Manually** enter each drug into costing form. Submit costing report & turnaround time report.

**AFTER** Stock adjust in billing system/records drips in tracking form. **Pre-formulated Costing Report using PivotTable**. Submit costing report & turnaround time report.

**4.8 man-hours saved monthly!**  
↓ Transcription errors!

Solutions implementation costs = **\$0**

Total of **232.8** man-hours savings per month!

**2794** man-hours savings per annum!

**\$135,411** cost savings per annum!

## CONCLUSION

- This study demonstrates that seemingly insignificant differences in how we carry out our work can accumulate to significant time and cost savings, allowing staff to focus on their core responsibilities of delivering quality patient care.
- Change is an inevitable constant and resources are often limited - we will continue to review, improve and adapt our processes to overcome the evolving challenges.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>Arnout Orelio (2020). Lean Thinking for Emerging Healthcare Leaders. Business Express Press.  
 - Our illustration of tardigrade, a microscopic animal that is renowned for its ability to survive extreme conditions. This symbolizes the spirit of improvement and adaptability in order to overcome the challenges.