**Script\_ Module 3\_ Developing healthcare solutions**

**[Slide 1]:** Welcome to the second topic of Module 3: Developing Healthcare Solutions. In this e-learning lesson, you will gain insights into the world of healthcare processes and explore how effective process improvement can lead to better patient outcomes and a more integrated healthcare ecosystem. By the end of this session, you’ll understand how thoughtful process design can significantly impact both patient care and organizational efficiency.

**[Slide 2]:** In this module, we’ll cover various essential topics to build a comprehensive understanding of healthcare process improvement. We’ll start with an introduction to process fundamentals, explore why processes matter, and look at the steps for initiating process development. We’ll identify symptoms of ineffective processes and investigate how to uncover their root causes. Additionally, we’ll explore the role of digital solutions in refining processes, how to design effective workflows, and highlight crucial tools for process development. You’ll also see practical examples of process optimization in healthcare and, finally, wrap up with some key takeaways.

**[Slide 3]:** Our learning objectives for this module are clear and actionable. By the end, you should be able to understand and apply fundamental concepts in process development and strategic planning. We will explore digital tools that can boost process efficiency, analyze processes for their effectiveness, and identify opportunities for improvement. You’ll also learn to critically assess existing routines, questioning practices that may be ineffective or in need of enhancement. This comprehensive approach will equip you with the skills to evaluate and innovate within your healthcare environment.

**[Slide 4]:** Let’s begin with an introduction to the role of processes in healthcare. In this lesson, we’ll dive into the essentials of process development and improvement within healthcare settings, learning how to create systems that are both efficient and patient-centered. Effective process organization is crucial for delivering high-quality care. With well-designed processes, healthcare facilities can achieve improved patient outcomes, enhanced staff productivity, and overall better service quality. By aligning process organization with the goals of patient care, we contribute to a healthcare ecosystem that is responsive and supportive.

**[Slide 5]:** Think back to the last time you visited a post office or an administration office, perhaps to renew a passport or driver’s license. How was the experience? Did it go smoothly, or did you think to yourself, “This should be quicker, or easier”? Now, consider your workplace: how often do you have to provide personal data repeatedly, despite having worked there for years? Have you ever had requests misplaced or delayed because of a lack of organization? Are these processes still paper-based? And if they’re digital, are the platforms user-friendly, stable, and easy to navigate?

Sometimes, dealing with inefficient processes can be frustrating—so frustrating that we feel like tearing up paperwork or smashing a screen in exasperation. This is where well-organized processes come in. They help eliminate these pain points and streamline tasks, which is especially crucial in healthcare, where efficient processes don’t just improve satisfaction; they can literally save lives.

Process organization and process-oriented thinking can go a long way in ensuring that patients and clients are satisfied and receive high-quality services. Through effective process design, we can simplify and coordinate activities that often become fragmented due to specialization. For instance, by organizing processes thoughtfully, we can ensure that patients don’t spend unnecessary hours at appointments, aren’t left waiting in front of the wrong door, and have clear information on what will happen next. Ideally, they won’t need to knock on a door just to find out what’s going on.

Unfortunately, in many organizations, the challenges that patients or clients face to access services go unaddressed. We sometimes assume that patients have all the time in the world, understand regulations on their own, and that the institution primarily serves those who work there, rather than the people it’s meant to help. As a result, we stick to the “this is how we’ve always done it” approach without questioning it. But with a customer-centered mindset and process-driven perspective, meaningful improvements are possible—no matter what our role may be within an organisation.

**[Slide 6]:** Within organisations, no activity occurs in isolation—each action is part of a broader chain of interconnected processes. Process organisation is about logically connecting these activities to improve service quality, reduce costs, and shorten lead times. Middle managers and team leaders, who often possess detailed knowledge of these activities, play a key role in organising processes. There are two types of processes: core (main) and supporting. Core processes are patient-facing activities that directly contribute to care, while supporting processes, such as laboratory services or housekeeping, enable core processes to function effectively. Both are essential to creating a holistic and efficient healthcare experience.

**[Slide 7]:** Now, let’s put this concept into practice with an exercise. Arrange the steps of various healthcare processes—like emergency response, hospital care, nursing, and pharmacy services—in the correct order. By understanding the sequence, you gain insight into how each step builds upon the previous, ultimately contributing to a smooth and coordinated care experience.

**[Slide 8]:** Hospitals and other organisations are often visualized as a hierarchical triangle, with management at the top and healthcare providers forming the foundation. Different levels need effective communication and coordination to bridge gaps. Hospitals also function as interconnected “islands” of departments, each with its specific role yet contributing to the broader patient experience. For instance, while a patient might interact with multiple departments like radiology, pharmacy, and physical therapy, they only see their experience as a journey toward better health. Our goal is to guide patients seamlessly across these “islands,” creating a unified and patient-centered care pathway.

**[Slide 9]:** Today’s healthcare customers have high expectations, shaped by increased access to information and higher education levels. While private companies adapt to customer needs to remain competitive, public organisations may lack this incentive, as funding often comes from central budgets rather than direct customer payments. Patients may spend long hours waiting or navigating administrative hurdles, and to better understand their experiences, healthcare organisations should employ tools like surveys, feedback mechanisms, and service data analysis. In turn, streamlining processes benefits not only patients but also internal staff by reducing inefficiencies and fostering a cooperative work environment.

**[Slide 10]:** Next, we have an exercise that will deepen your understanding of who benefits from each healthcare process. By identifying both internal and external clients within the healthcare system, you’ll better understand how each process impacts different stakeholders.

**[Slide 11]:** To enhance processes, we must focus on both effectiveness and efficiency. For example, an admission survey designed for accessibility is effective, but if an eID card can fulfill the need without additional forms, it may be more efficient to rely on the eID. Efficiency reduces resource use—like time and costs—while effectiveness improves quality and outcomes. By optimizing processes for both, such as implementing automated medication dispensing systems, we not only streamline operations but also create better patient and staff experiences.

**[Slide 12]:** When aiming for patient-centered care, it’s best to start with critical processes that directly impact patients’ health and satisfaction. Critical processes are usually repeated frequently and involve multiple stakeholders, impacting a large portion of patients. By understanding the value clients expect from these processes, and why it may be missing, we can identify where to make impactful improvements.

**[Slide 13]:** Identifying inefficient processes often starts by looking for common signs, such as information gaps, slow service times, or complex paperwork. Complaints, delays, and recurring issues may indicate underlying problems in the process itself. In these cases, consider how a redesign could benefit both clients and internal teams.

**[Slide 14]:** When we analyse processes, we find that issues often stem from factors like unnecessary duplication or fragmentation of activities. Some processes may also be outdated, relying on paper-based methods that could be replaced with more efficient digital tools. It’s essential to examine each step critically, finding ways to standardise processes where possible to improve outcomes.

**[Slide 15]:** Digitalisation can be transformative but should not replace offline processes without careful consideration. If an offline process is simply digitized without redesign, it can lead to inefficient outcomes. By thoughtfully integrating digital solutions that enhance process flow, we can avoid redundancy and create processes that are efficient and user-friendly.

**[Slide 16]:** Let’s revisit some of the disruptive technologies you’ve learned about, with a focus on how they can transform traditional care processes. Think about how these tools can inspire innovation in your daily practice. Links and resources are provided here to further explore these possibilities.

**[Slide 17]:** Effective communication is the cornerstone of process improvement. Engaging with patients, colleagues, and external teams helps identify each stakeholder’s needs, fostering a collaborative approach to healthcare delivery. While achieving perfect processes may not be possible, we can strive to continuously improve quality, time, and cost efficiency through a balanced approach. Explore the Lean, Six Sigma, and Service Design methodologies to deepen your understanding and application of process improvement techniques.

**[Slide 18] - [Slide 21]** The following slides provide video resources that cover Lean Six Sigma, service design, and process mapping tools. Engage with each video to gain insights into these critical methodologies and complete the True/False exercise to test your understanding.

**[Slide 22]:** Now, let’s look at how you too can initiate changes in processes. Here are two real-life examples designed to inspire your journey toward improvement.

**[Slide 23]:** Imagine taking on a project to streamline hospital operations as a university course task. This was the case for a healthcare professional who decided to address a critical issue in her hospital’s surgical operations. Through data gathering, she discovered that 26% of surgeries in the general surgery department were being canceled—26% of those due to inadequate patient preparation. The root cause? A lack of effective communication between healthcare providers and patients, which left patients arriving without essential documents or with unmanaged medical conditions, resulting in last-minute cancellations and delays. Recognising the urgency of this communication gap, the hospital launched an educational program to prepare patients for surgery better. They implemented a multifaceted approach, including comprehensive informational materials and a telephone consultation system that provided personalized guidance before and after surgeries. Patients were now equipped with clear instructions for every step of the surgical process.

The impact was transformative. Surgery cancellations due to preparation issues dropped significantly, and patients arrived for their procedures informed and prepared. This not only improved patient experience but also reduced staff stress and workload, as preventable issues were drastically reduced. Additionally, communication between patients and healthcare professionals improved, fostering a more cooperative environment. This smooth workflow led to increased professional satisfaction among the medical staff, who valued the enhanced efficiency.

In essence, this project illustrates how addressing the root causes of surgery cancellations improved patient care and boosted the morale and effectiveness of the healthcare team.

**[Slide 24]:** At Lugano Regional Hospital, the need for improvement in housekeeping measures sparked an innovative idea: what if hospital housekeeping could operate as efficiently as a hotel? In 2023, the hospital took this concept to the next level by launching a pilot project with a digital platform to enhance staff safety, service quality, operational management, and reduce costs. Housekeepers play an essential role in patient care and infection control, often working out of sight but impacting everyone’s safety. Through the platform, housekeepers were equipped with tablets providing real-time updates on room status, isolation cases, and infection control notifications, reducing the risk of contagion and enabling swift responses to potential health risks. Previously, housekeeping staff manually tracked patient discharges, updated schedules, and communicated with departments—a time-consuming process prone to errors. With the digital platform, these tasks became seamless. Process mapping enabled the hospital to cut unnecessary steps, streamline workflows, and even eliminate paper-based administration. The platform facilitated real-time monitoring, allowing housekeepers to report issues instantly and request maintenance as needed, enhancing response times and overall efficiency. The platform’s impact was significant. Not only did it improve safety and efficiency, but it also boosted patient satisfaction as each room was held to higher standards of cleanliness and comfort. Additionally, the data generated allowed for better cost control and resource allocation, helping to manage the hospital's finances more effectively. The pilot’s success was made possible by management’s commitment and the strong support of the housekeeping team. This initiative showcased the value of the housekeeping staff within the healthcare team and demonstrated the power of investing in improved tools, processes, and the working environment for essential personnel.

**[Slide 25]:** Let’s pause to consider an important idea: it’s the frontline employees—the nurses, support staff, and primary care providers—who often hold the deepest insights into day-to-day processes. They know where bottlenecks appear, how tasks could be simplified, and the small adjustments that can make a big difference. Yet, waiting for perfect conditions or approvals can sometimes prevent necessary change. Instead, take the initiative. Even small steps can make an impact, and when those small changes come from within the team, they often gain momentum and acceptance more quickly. So don’t wait for the context or conditions to be perfectly set. Start with a small process adjustment, and see where it can take you. With this mindset, continuous improvement becomes a shared responsibility, a mission that you can influence from any position.

**[Slide 26]:** In closing, let’s reflect on the key insights we’ve covered. This module has shown how effective process design is essential in addressing inefficiencies, enhancing patient experiences, and promoting quality care. You explored practical methods and tools, which, when applied, enable healthcare teams to streamline workflows, reduce costs, and create a more seamless, patient-centered journey. Moreover, the course emphasized that process improvement isn’t a one-time effort—it’s a continuous commitment to adapt to new needs and technologies. As healthcare evolves, so do the processes that support it. By fostering a mindset of continuous improvement, healthcare providers can drive sustainable advancements in quality and delivery, meeting patients’ needs in an ever-changing landscape.

**[Slide 27]:** Thank you for joining this module on developing healthcare solutions. We hope that the lessons and examples shared here have provided valuable insights, sparking ideas on how to enhance your own processes and contribute to better patient care. If you have further questions or want to dive deeper, we encourage you to explore the additional resources provided.