**Lean Eliminates Waste in Theatres**
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Unused or under-used Operating Rooms. Equipment breakdowns. Assets must be fully utilised. Mismatches between delivery and usage represent a gap in the utilisation process, and therefore are a waste. Poor planning, leading to vacant Operating Rooms, prevents surgery from being cost-effective. Assets can also be used uneconomically when procedures last longer than envisaged standard operating times. Patients entering the Operating Block at the wrong time can slow down the whole process, as can patients who cannot leave immediately after surgery due to complications upon waking. In such cases the existence of a feeder line (buffer) is cost-effective: a place for accommodating patients awaking more slowly after surgery, while the Operating Room the procedure took place in can continue to be used as planned without affecting flow. This is a case of factory feeder lines applied to the hospital environment. This is widely recognised as a useful arrangement in health care, for reasons of safety and for ensuring an uninterrupted manufacturing flow; it also ensures less waste of (production) time. The early closing of one or more Operating Rooms or an Operating Block, when there are fixed overheads and personnel costs and expensive and sophisticated equipment, is regarded as a non recoverable loss of resources, due to poor planning. A classic example of waste is the sudden cancellation of surgeries sometimes for organisational reasons alone.

Moving materials or information: Inefficient staff movements. Patients waiting everywhere The first thing that most people will say when describing hospitals is the amount of people waiting for something. Lack of activity is a sign that processes are not flowing efficiently. That schedules are not respected, that improving punctuality is an objective that most people still do not understand Waiting rooms are full of people who have no idea when they will be seen, or when their clinical process will end. The purpose of the value stream map is therefore to:

- keep the process throbbing
- drive activities towards continuous flow delivery
- pinpoint where there is waste that needs eliminating
- involve all those involved in a common language
- develop work plans
- set priorities.