

A Retrospective Case Study Report of the Projectification and Quick Wins during the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Governmental Healthcare Sector: Lessons Learned from Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most challenging disasters healthcare institutions are facing, requiring healthcare systems to balance meeting general healthcare needs with those caused by the pandemic. Healthcare systems were not designed to deal with this crisis: an unpredictable, large-scale challenge that has required urgent resource mobilization, affecting whole populations. However, there has also been no time to debate systems' abilities to deal with the crisis, not least because the pandemic opposes the general direction of these systems. The urgent need for new fast-track, quick-win projects was necessary because we were time-constrained. We also needed an effective approach – which globally known project management tools could be efficiently applied? The widely accepted Project Management Institute (PMI)

model and the popular Six Sigma Define, Measure, Analyze, Implement, Control (DMAIC) approach were two reasonable methodologies to select, so we aimed to modify these tools to achieve quick results. An initial needs assessment of the pandemic's challenges required careful consideration of our high-impact healthcare facilities' ability to meet those challenges. Our assessment concluded that ability was limited, and as Lean Six Sigma DMAIC principles are more effectively applicable to quality improvement initiatives, the combined application of DMAIC and PMI principles, which enable robust and stable project initiation, governance, enterprise engagement, and measurable quality deliverables, enabled us to focus on structured project management and quality outcomes. **Methods:** This modified approach was applied to the 10 main Ministry of Health (MOH) hospitals and 2 specialized care centers in the Al-Ahsa region, to design and initiate 40 mini-projects that could yield quick wins. This study was designed to measure the value of applying these tools and learn lessons retrospectively. **Results:** The successful ability to eliminate identified healthcare challenges within 5 weeks of launching the mini-projects, meeting an average of 74% of planned baseline targets.

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