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DESCRIPTION

Healthcare is a complex environment containing healthcare professionals with an array of skillsets and backgrounds. Humber River Health's (HRH) Quality and Patient Safety (QPS) team collaborates with different hospital departments to identify opportunities for improvement in processes and patient outcomes. An increase in medications waiting to be returned by the SwissLog PillPick in the pharmacy department prompted the review of the processes in place to identify any gaps and quality improvement opportunities. By employing quality improvement (QI) tools, the specialized processes were deconstructed into individual sections, which were examined to identify opportunities for improvement.

OBJECTIVE

To leverage QI tools to map pharmacy processes and identify barriers causing delays in medication returns.

ACTIONS TAKEN

An initial stakeholder meeting was held with QI specialists, pharmacy automation supervisor, managers, and director. The pharmacy team provided an in-depth overview of the processes and tour of the department to display the steps involved for medications being returned to the SwissLog PillPick. Multiple process maps were created to better understand the processes, identify the gaps, and opportunities for improvement. This included workflow map of the medication return process, along with a swim lane process map to further breakdown functions.

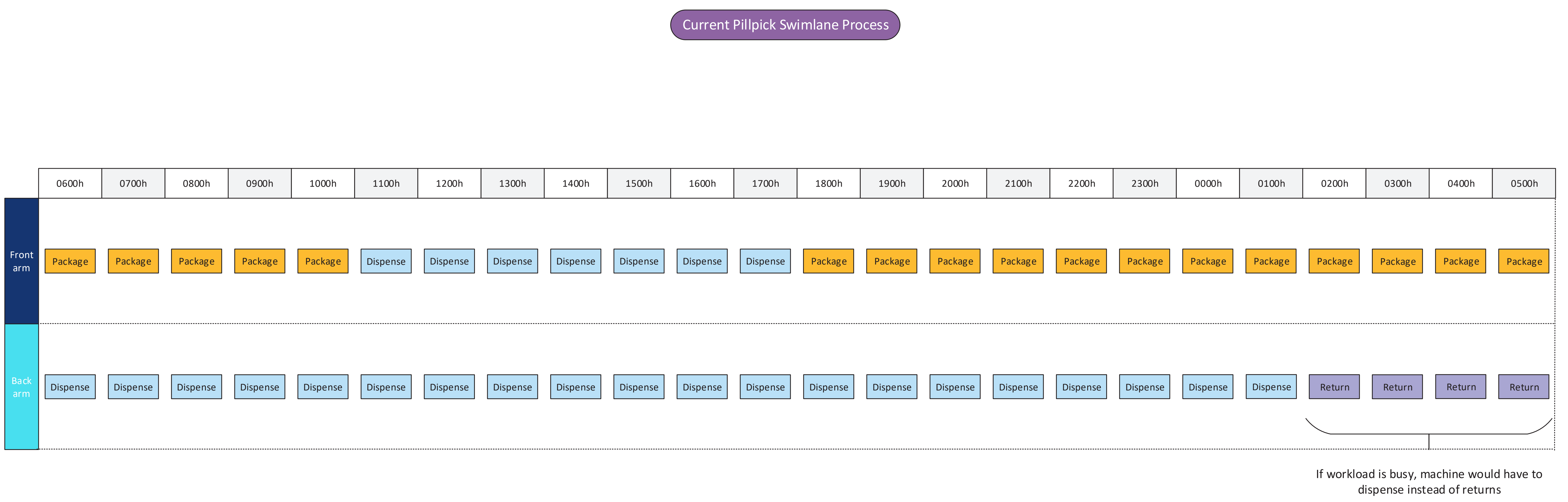


Figure 1. Swim lane process map of the pharmacy SwissLog PillPick, clarifying the roles of each arm, actions, and duration of time to perform actions outlined.

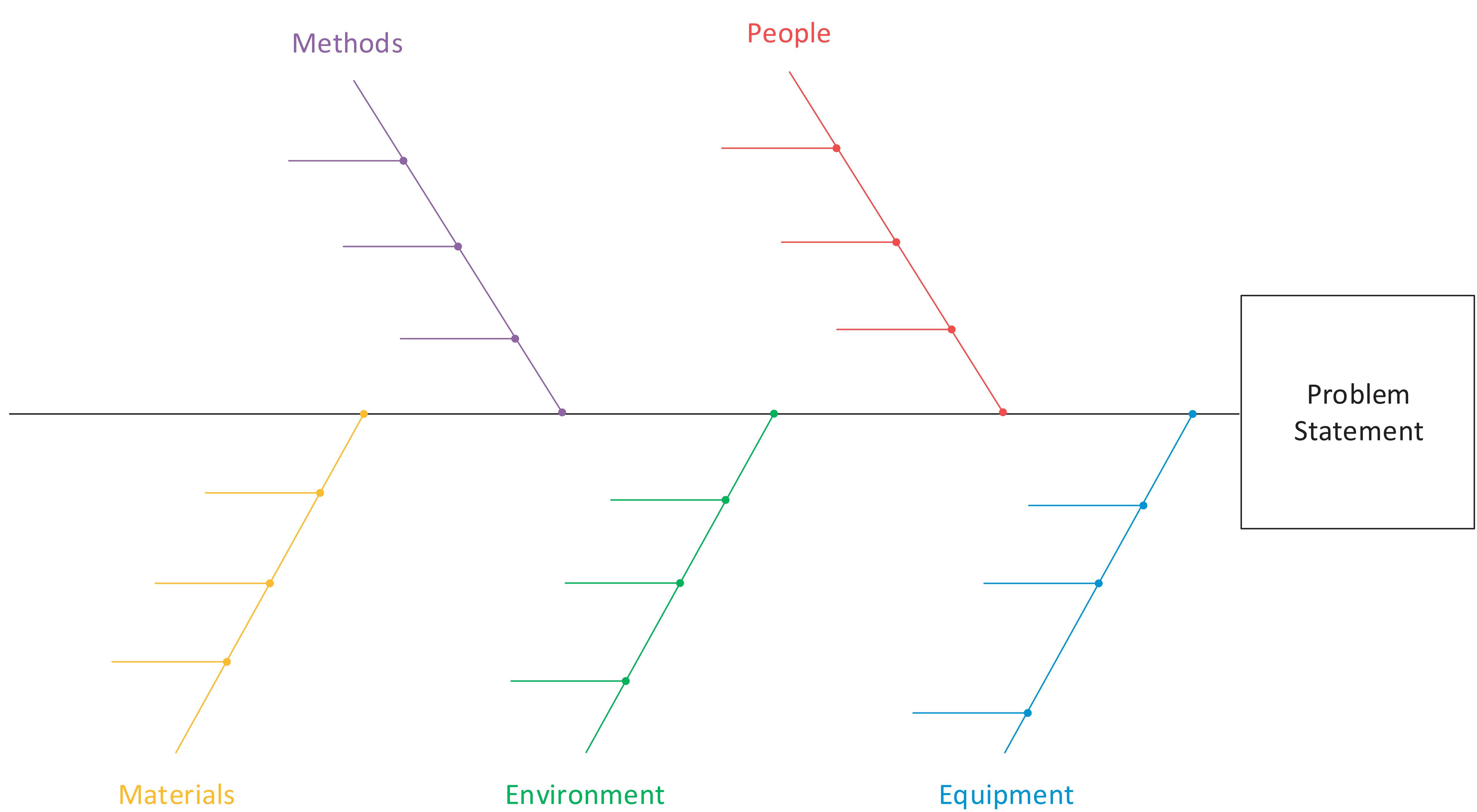


Figure 2. Fishbone diagram template to be used to conduct a root-cause analysis of the delay in medication returns to the pharmacy Swisslog Pillpick.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Utilizing multiple process mapping strategies helped to breakdown the complex sequence of actions involving the SwissLog PillPick machine's return process. The use of a standard process mapping tools simplifies the expected processes in QI, and the swim lane process map tool breaks down the roles and actions in a process. With the process maps finalized, a root-cause analysis will be completed using a fish bone diagram to examine potential causes for the increase in medication returns. Through effective use of these QI tools, processes can be thoroughly assessed to determine potential enhancements.

LESSONS LEARNED

Leveraging QI process mapping strategies can support teams in identifying opportunities for improvement in existing processes.

