Aim
To improve the patient experience and reduce patient waiting time at St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne Cancer Centre.

Method
A collaborative project with nursing, medical, pharmacy, pathology, redesign and office administration was commenced. This multi-disciplinary group received training in TPS theory from Toyota’s Supplier Development team. Patient journey information flow maps were developed by the group to illustrate the current patient journey through the cancer centre. Current state maps of a chemotherapy order’s movement through pharmacy and a blood test’s movement through pathology were also produced.

Key areas identified for improvement
The key areas identified for review were:
- Treatment scheduling and Clinic bookings
- Scripts and Authorisation
- Communication

Errors on chemotherapy prescriptions were identified as a source of re-work for staff, resulting in patients waiting. A new chemotherapy order form was developed including prompts for pre-medications and hydration. This has standardised the manual prescribing process and reduced re-work.

Results
Implementation of these improvement ideas has resulted in a reduction in patient waiting time for those patients who require medical review from 15 minutes in December 2014 to 10 minutes in April 2016.

Doctor’s consultation time has reduced from 35 minutes in December 2014 to 32 minutes in April 2016 and shows a downward trend. This was achieved by introducing a lead clinician, tumor streaming and standardising the availability of the information required by doctors.

The proportion of patients seen in less than 15 minutes increased from 45% to 76%.

Conclusion
St Vincent’s cancer centre has improved wait time and patient satisfaction as a result of this collaborative project using the key elements of the Toyota Production System.