Tauranga Hospital is the first New Zealand hospital to implement the productivity and care improvement programme Releasing Time to Care across all its wards; 10 in total. It did so between January 2009 and October 2013.

Tauranga Hospital’s Surgical Ward 3a was the first in the country to complete all the programme’s modules.
The Productive Ward: Releasing Time to Care programme was developed by the UK National Health Service (NHS). It is based on Toyota’s ‘lean thinking’ principles of car production.

The programme aims to improve care quality by eliminating waste and activities that do not add value. This enables hospital staff to spend more time with patients, thereby improving patient safety and ward efficiency.

Staff identify areas for improvement by looking at processes such as drugs rounds, ward rounds and discharges. They then find ways of streamlining these processes.

It is a modular, structured programme consisting of three foundation modules and eight process modules:

1. *Knowing How We Are Doing* establishes the base measures used to track improvements.
2. *The Well Organised Ward* focuses on organising the physical workplace to be more efficient.
3. *Patient Status at a Glance* is about patient information and how it is presented on a whiteboard.

Typical benefits include:
- increased direct care time spent with patients
- improved safety (participating hospitals have reported decreased numbers of falls)
- reduced costs and waste
- improved staff morale (improvements in nurse and patient satisfaction reported)
- reduced medicine round times
- reduced shift handover time
- reduced time taken for meal rounds and patient nutrition improved
- less time spent searching for equipment.

Progress is tracked using a scorecard measuring improvements in patient safety, efficiency of care, patient satisfaction and staff wellbeing.
With the support of senior management, Registered Nurse Lisa Skeet-Smith (who had just completed a master trainer’s course in Releasing Time to Care: The Productive Ward in the UK) set about implementing the programme at the BOPDHB in early 2009.

Tauranga Hospital’s Surgical Ward 3a was chosen as the showcase ward and Clinical Nurse Manager Carolyn Gent launched the programme with her team in January 2009. From the start the team embraced the programme, drove change and plotted their progress. They achieved outstanding results including:

- time spent on direct patient care increased from 39 per cent to 57 per cent (this equals up to 2102 hours extra per year or $61,600 worth of time1)
- time taken for shift handover was reduced from around 30 minutes to 10 to 15 minutes (freeing up an estimated 684 hours a year)
- medication errors reduced by 85 per cent
- fewer patient falls
- shift handover times were halved
- staff satisfaction increased and turnover decreased by an average of two staff members per month since 2009.

Staff embraced the programme with enthusiasm and some responses to a survey included:

“I have been away for a week and normally would come back to problems, issues and complaints. All I have had today is happy staff coming and telling me how great it is on the ward now.”
Clinical Nurse Manager

“When I feel like I need cheering up I go and visit 3a because the staff want to engage with you. They are positive and happy about what is happening on their ward.”
Quality Manager

“It is fantastic to see one of our most experienced senior nurses get her passion back for nursing (due to the programme).”
New Zealand Nurses Organisation worksite convener to Joint Action Group

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1 The dollar amounts are worked out using $29.3 as the average registered nurse hourly wage.
In July 2009, following the success of Surgical Ward 3a, other wards were asked if they wanted to run the programme. Every ward in the BOPDHB asked to be considered.

In November 2009, the Surgical Ward at Whakatane Hospital and the Paediatric Ward at Tauranga Hospital began implementing the programme. The Health in Aging Ward, which has 40 beds, launched the programme in January 2010 and the Admission Planning Unit at Tauranga Hospital launched in September 2010.

By October 2013, all 10 wards at Tauranga Hospital and one ward at Whakatane Hospital had fully implemented the programme. Over 625 staff have now been trained in Releasing Time to Care. The Mental Health Unit plans to start implementing The Productive Mental Health Ward this year.

Other notable quality improvements experienced by these wards include:

- bedside handover (which reduces medication events and improves patient and staff satisfaction) implemented on all wards
- drug charts reorganised to make documentation easier for staff
- a portable write-up trolley (which placed third in the DHB 2011 Innovation Awards) was designed and developed.

“The benefits are both tangible and intangible, some of the things are really hard to measure for the dollar value but staff who can come to work and do the job they believe they are employed to do which is to be with patients – that return on your investment and for your staff is certainly well worthwhile putting the programme in.”

BOPDHB Director of Nursing Julie Robinson.