

Essay on continuous quality improvement

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The current business environment is extremely competitive, and more focus has been put on product or service quality. Quality products or services lay down a strong foundation for any successful business. Quality benefits the organization through brand loyalty; repeat purchases and positive word of mouth. A number of studies indicate that quality results to customer satisfaction; satisfied customers positively impact on loyalty, retention and repeat purchases. The studies further point that satisfied customers always share the experience with other five or six people. On the contrary, displeased customers are more like to share the displeasure with other ten people (Klein et al., 2010).

Healthcare systems have an obligation to provide quality care, the systems deal with life of individuals, and any error would lead to detrimental consequences. In my experience as a health manager, I have experimented with various quality approaches. Continuous quality improvement approaches have proved to be most reliable in improvement of the quality patient care. Continuous improvement concentrates on a four-phased cycle when implementing quality. The phases include plan, do, check and act (Sollecito & Kaluzny, 2009).

During the planning phase, the managers identify and clarify the problems. The identification of the problem should be based on well analyzed and reviewed data. The data should clearly illustrate the causes of the problem, possible solutions to the problem and expected outcome of the so the solutions. Planning also develops the implementation strategy and outlines the evaluation strategy Klein et al., (2010). For example, a problem in a healthcare facility could be patient long waiting time; the causes of the long

waiting could be understaffing or use of the traditional clinical information system.

Improvement that could be made is the installation of the electronic records system. Expected outcome is increased workflow, improved patient safety, improved efficiency and effectiveness of the services, general patient satisfaction and reduction in cost. Implementation strategy could involve purchasing and installation of the electronic health records system and training of the healthcare workers. The process could be evaluated using comparative data, comparing the previous data on the number of patients served per hour before implementation of the strategy and after implementation of the strategy. Patients' opinion on the quality of service could also serve as an effective evaluation tool (Sollecito & Kaluzny, 2009).

In the DO phase, the health facility would gain the approval to install the EHR system from relevant authorities such as the ministry of medical services or public health. The phase also involves a signing of tasks to individuals so that tasks are clearly articulated without any redundancy. During the DO phase the progress of the improvement strategy is monitored. The management could use a checklist to certain that indeed the program is on the right track. Managers also collect data to foster improvement by identifying areas that are not performing as had been projected (Sollecito & Kaluzny, 2009).

Check is the evolution phase. The project should have a timeline after which the program is evaluated to check if it has achieved its goals and objectives and the consequences of the program in organizational operation.

Continuous collection of data is also performed in the phase. In the example

in the planning phase, the evaluation would be based on checking if EHR system reduced waiting time. The benefits and consequences of the system such as improved customer satisfaction, reduction in cost and capital intensive nature of the electronic records system are also part of the Check phase (Cole, 2008)

In the Act phase, the organization would look into alternative improvement that would supplement the current quality improvement. The phase also checks if the objective of the implantation if the program was achieved. The next step if the program implemented failed to achieve the objectives. The phase also reviews the consequences of the implantation of the program and feedback of all stakeholders in the organization (Cole, 2008).

Continuous quality improvement operates on the principle that the change on the negative feedbacks would improve the implantation of the quality improvement program. Sometimes the principle is applied blindly leading to the reduction of quality instead of improved quality. Quality improvement strategy should be modified in that the whole system is given attention and concentration should not only be put on the negative feedback. The strategy also does not have time-lines; the introduction of the time-line would add more value to the strategy as it would be more focused.

References

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