

# QIPP through process mapping

Delivering QIPP (quality, innovation, productivity and prevention) within your organisation may be an important task for your department. It involves delving deeper into the nuts and bolts of your processes to identify problem areas that must be changed in order to enable improvements to be made. There are many tools available to you though to help facilitate this project. Following on from the last issue of NHE, Value Stream Mapping, Quality Companion and Healthcare, this article looks into process mapping as a helpful method.

A process is a sequence of related activities that must be performed to deliver a product e.g. dispensing a prescription or a service e.g. securing an organ for transplant.

To visualise your process, flowcharts can be useful, but process maps are more suitable as these consider the critical success factor of the process, known as the big 'Y', alongside the smaller goals or outputs and the steps or inputs required at each stage to deliver these smaller goals.

In practical terms, you need to define the scope of your project, so your team have a clear view of the target process they need to consider, and any exclusions. Ideally this would be contained in a project charter, along with a measurement system to quantify the process before and after the project, so you can show impact.

Once the scope is defined, you need to walk through the process as a team – literally – on the front line, to see for yourselves exactly what occurs in the

process. It's important to ask open-ended questions, observe and record as much detail as possible (take lots of paper, pencils, stopwatches and maybe the sensitive use of a video camera would be helpful). This can be reviewed at leisure and provides useful evidence.

Consider whether timing is likely to impact on how the process operates, so that you can capture the amount of variation when mapping it out. The aim is to map all the activities involved, the outputs for that activity (desired or undesired), and the delivery inputs required. Also capture any decision points within the process – as each handoff can potentially contain "hidden hospital" = activities that take place, consuming resource, of no benefit to the patient, such as repeat tests, phoning for information, waiting for consultant and such like.

After walking the process, the process map may be generated.

Each activity is represented as an oblong 'process box' (Fig. 1a). Outputs (Y), are shown to the right of the process box and inputs (X) required to achieve your desired output are of the left of the process box. You can then clearly show that to achieve Y, you need to have X in place, if not then there could be inconsistency, delay and waste in the process.

Each decision is represented as a diamond 'decision box' (Fig. 1b) with Yes/No routings to show which activities happen following that decision. It helps to capture any exceptions that may occur, such as if a patient refuses a transfusion, as this can show you where "hidden hospital" activities are.

Once you have generated the process map, this should be validated by the team and those working the process. Therefore the resulting process map should capture a true representation of the current process (Fig. 2a) and not as you believe it to be (Fig. 2b).

The process map then becomes the starting point for your team to identify activities that might be changed or eliminated as part of improvements, delivering the process as it should be (Fig. 2c).

To help you build and communicate effective process maps, Quality Companion by Minitab provides an easy-to-use process mapping tool to enable your team to generate process maps rapidly so that you can get to identify problem areas and tackle these at the earliest opportunity.

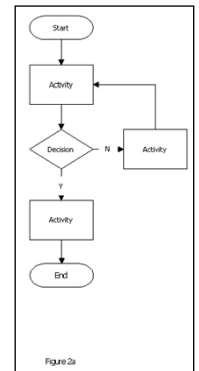


Figure 2a

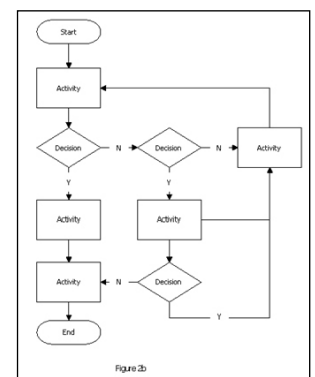


Figure 2b

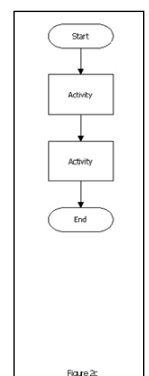


Figure 2c

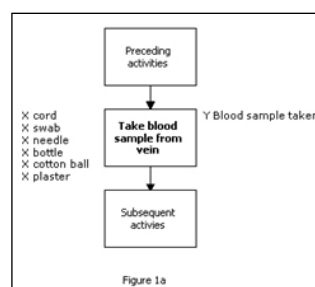


Figure 1a

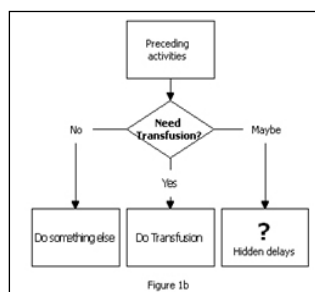


Figure 1b

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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