

Measurement of Quality Improvement

Improvement Tips

Improvement is not about measurement, however effective measurement and data collection plays an important role. This guide provides some measurement guidance.

How will we know that a change is an improvement?

Answering this question usually requires more than one measure. A balanced set of five to eight measures will ensure that the system is improved. There are three types of measure:

Outcome measures

The voice of the patient. How is the system performing? What is the result? Outcome measures will most likely lag behind process measures.

Process measures

The voice of the workings of the system. Are the parts/steps in the system performing as planned? Process measures will start to move first.

Balancing Measures

Balancing measures assess whether the system as a whole is being improved. What happened to the system as we improved the outcome and process measures (e.g. unanticipated consequences, other factors influencing outcome)? Did any other factors influence the outcome? Monitoring balancing measures; you are not looking for movement (pay attention if there is movement).

Measurement Guidelines

- A few key measures should be reported, and studied by the team monthly.
- Be careful about over-doing process measures for monthly reports.
- Make use of available databases to develop the measures.
- Integrate data collection for measures into the daily routine.
- Plot data on the key measures each month during the life of the project.

Measurement and Data Collection During PDSA Cycles

- Collect *useful* data, not perfect data - the purpose of the data is learning, not evaluation.
- Use a pencil and paper until the information system is ready.
- Use sampling as part of the plan to collect the data to reduce workload.
- Use qualitative data (feedback) rather than wait for quantitative data.
- Record what went wrong during the data collection.

Integrate Data Collection for Measures in Daily Work

- Include the collection of data with another current work activity (for example, pain scores with other vital signs; data from office visit flowsheets).
- Develop an easy-to-use data collection form or make Information Systems input and output easy for clinicians.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities for on going data collection.
- Set aside time to review data with all those that collect it.