CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

How do we embed a culture of Continuous Quality Improvement?

CQI involves creating a system to reflect on and refine improvement efforts that aim to provide a better experience of care, improve population health, minimise per capita health care costs and improve the working life of health care providers. This requires teams to create a culture that supports a constant review by your team of the health service's processes and systems in order to meet these aims.

The UK National Health Service's Institute for Innovation and Improvement developed a sustainability model (and accompanying guide) that helps health care providers to implement and maintain successful improvement initiatives.[27] The model consists of ten sustainability factors relating to processes, staff and the organisation. The team selects the description that best represents the improvement initiative for each factor. The model uses a weighted scoring system to obtain an overall score, and outlines strengths and weaknesses for each factor. The ten sustainability factors are briefly described below.

CQI

Process Considerations

- Benefits beyond helping individuals - reducing waste or avoiding duplication; improving working life

- Credibility of the benefits - identifying the benefits of improvement; communicating the evidence of the benefits

- Adaptability of the new processes - meeting needs; succession planning

- Ability of the new system(s) to monitor effectiveness - measuring for improvement; feedback processes; whole of team involvement

Staff Considerations

- Involvement and training - creating a culture of involvement with all staff; training and development infrastructure

- Behaviour towards sustaining change - engaging with staff for change ideas; giving staff training in, and responsibility for, testing change ideas

- Senior leadership engagement and support - influencing change; taking personal responsibility

- Clinical leadership engagement and support - influencing change; taking personal responsibility

Organisation Considerations

- Alignment with business vision and goals - aligning the change aims with overall strategic aims

- Infrastructure - aligning roles and job descriptions with the new processes; communicating effectively; resourcing appropriately

This model can be used by teams to identify the current state of readiness for undertaking and implementing continuous quality improvement work and to identify the areas the team most needs to work on.

27. National Health Service Institute for Innovation and Improvement, 2010, Sustainability Model and Guide, https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/Sustainability-model-and-guide/

Aligning with the sustainability model, there are several features that health care organisations need to ensure are in place to support an ongoing focus on improvement work. These have been listed as[28]:

- improvement leadership
- a culture supportive of improvement
- knowledge of improvement methods
- motivation to change
- team diversity
- physician involvement
- subject matter expertise
- team familiarity and experience.

To support the spread and sustainability of CQI in your health service, consider how you will:

1. Develop a new approach to leadership that moves away from the imposition of solutions from top down to recognise that team members are often better placed to make improvements through a process of discovery

2. Provide the required resources and time to enable ongoing improvement activity

3. Ensure that patients, families and carers are involved in improvement activities

4. Enable team members to take ownership of the improvement process and to celebrate successful initiatives, and

5. Commit to making continuous quality improvement central to the way care is provided[29]

There is no single way to ensure that the benefits achieved by QI initiatives last. Developing a culture of CQI requires a commitment to maintaining an innovative approach to change, consistently measuring for improvement, and re-evaluating processes regularly to identify what does and does not work. Team members need the knowledge, resources and time to undertake improvement work and to be supported by skilled leaders who enable and empower their teams[30].

28 Silver SA, McQuillan R, Harel Z, Weizman AV, Thomas A, Nesrallah G, Bell CM, Chan CT & Chertow GM, 2016, How to Sustain Change and Support Continuous Quality Improvement, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4858491/

29 The King's Fund, 2017, Embedding a culture of quality improvement, https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-11/Embedding-culture-QI-Kings-Fund-November-2017.pdf

30 NHSScotland Quality Improvement Hub, The Spread and Sustainability of Quality Improvement in Health care, 2014, http://www.qihub.scot.nhs.uk/media/596811/the%20spread%20and%20sustainability%20ofquality%20improvement%20in%20healthcare%20pdf%20.pdf