REGISTRY PERSPECTIVES

Creating a Quality Control Plan for Your Cancer Registry

By Dianne M. Cleveland, RHIA, CTR
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"Failing to plan is planning to fail" is a quote widely attributed to Alan Lakein, a well-known author on personal time management.1 Have you planned for quality control of your cancer registry? Have you considered going beyond the quality standards outlined by the Commission on Cancer (CoC), the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR), or the National Program of Cancer Registries (NPCR)? If not, now is the time to think about creating and implementing a robust and integrated quality control plan.

The initial step is to create a policy that reflects your organization’s quality expectations and that can meet its needs. This policy should provide a foundation to develop the quality control plan’s objectives and should be communicated clearly to staff.2

The next step is to define measurable objectives. The standard setters for cancer registries -- CoC, NAACCR and SEER -- provide the vision and include the definition of quality. Objectives should be appropriate for your organization. Make sure they can be implemented under the organization’s current structure and leadership.

When defining quality objectives, ask these questions:

1. What needs to be improved?
2. What resources would be required?
3. What changes would be necessary to encourage further growth and improvement?

A Quality Management System (QMS) is quantified information that assists in tracking for continuous improvement and used to identify successes. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has eight QMS principles: Customer Focus, Leadership, Involvement of People, Process Approach, System Approach to Management, Continual Improvement, Factual Approach to Decision Making, and Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationships. These principles can easily be adapted by a cancer registry to develop a quality control plan.3

Customer Focus
Consider both external customers, such as the state registry, the National Cancer Data Base (NCDB) and NPCR, as well as internal customers such as administrators, physicians and epidemiologists. Understand your customers’ current and future needs. Set goals to not only meet customer requirements, but strive to exceed their expectations.

Leadership
Review the purpose and direction of your organization. Managers should create and maintain an environment where cancer registry employees can become fully involved in achieving quality objectives.

Involvement of People
Cancer registry professionals at all levels should be involved and held accountable for their own performance. Are they motivated, committed and freely sharing their knowledge and experience?

Process Approach
Systematically define the activities necessary to obtain the desired results. Responsibility and accountability should be established for managing key activities. Risks, consequences and impacts of activities on administrators, physicians, standard setters and other interested parties should be evaluated.

System Approach to Management
Interrelated processes should be identified, understood and managed as a system. Focus the cancer registry’s quality control effort on key processes and integrate and align these to best achieve the desired results. Use measurement and evaluation to continually improve the system.

Continual Improvement
Be flexible to react quickly to change and opportunity. You should also provide cancer registry employees with...
training in the methods and tools of continual improvement. Also, you will need to establish goals for guidance and measures for tracking. Be sure to recognize and acknowledge improvements.

**Factual Approach to Decision Making**

Only make informed decisions and ensure the data and information used in decision-making are accurate, reliable and complete. The National Cancer Registrars Association refers to this as knowledge-based decision making.

**Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationships**

Even though the cancer registry does not have suppliers, this principle still has value. You should optimize cost and resources when possible. Your efforts will be appreciated by administrators. Communicate clearly and openly and share information and future plans. Inspire, encourage and recognize improvements and achievements.

As you can see, an effective quality control plan involves much more than the usual PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act). Consider including the above information and steps in addition to the CoC's Quality and Patient Care Improvement Standards or NPCA's Data Quality Requirements.

**References**


   http://www.iso.org/iso/iso_catalogue/management_and_leadership_standards/quality_management/qmp.htm

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NCRA membership is a great way to stay current on issues in the cancer registry field, including keeping up-to-date on technical changes and learning about new organizational development processes and techniques. For information about NCRA membership and to join, go to [www.ncra-usa.org](http://www.ncra-usa.org).

**Registry Perspectives Archives**

**COMMENTS**

Thanks for the "stir up". Needed from time to time.

Linda March 03, 2011

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