

eCQI Toolkit Methodology

eCQI Methodology Overview

Using Health IT does not automatically translate to improved outcomes. Using Health IT for quality improvement requires purposeful and thoughtful planning, effort and allocation of resources.

This toolkit will combine aspects of the Agile/Scrum delivery cycle (created for the IT industry) with the PDSA quality improvement methodology. The goal of this combined approach is to help produce valuable quality results in a quick and streamlined manner.

Quality Improvement Model

This toolkit will utilize aspects of the Agile/Scrum delivery cycle, which focuses on achieving value added changes quickly and efficiently, one change (or one group of changes) at a time. These systematic improvement cycles are called “sprints”. The goal of each sprint is to provide value added results for your organization approximately every 2-6 weeks. They also enable you to balance your improvement initiatives with your current workload. Each sprint should focus on one change (or logical group of changes) and may include one Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) iterative cycle (multiple times through the cycle).

The PDSA quality improvement methodology is an iterative, four-stage problem-solving model used for improving a process. PDSA is a simple yet powerful tool for accelerating change. (See appendix G for more information about PDSA). To insure stabilization of the changes that are implemented and to spread the improvements or best practices once they are defined and proven, we recommend you add phases to stabilize and spread the changes at the end of the final PDSA cycle, once goals are met.

The foundation of the PDSA methodology is the recognition that quality improvement is an ongoing cycle with strong emphasis on the use of data for decision making and to verify performance. (See appendix H for more information on the effective use of data and appendix I for a review of 7 basic data collection tools). This methodology will also incorporate the use of SMART (specific, measureable, attainable, relevant and time-based) goals as the foundation for planning and evaluating the success of your QI projects. (See appendix B for more information on SMART goals).

Project Management:

This toolkit is based on a “lightweight” project management approach, incorporating aspects of the Agile /Scrum delivery cycle for your quality improvement initiatives, which focuses on a minimum of structure and documentation, and instead, focusing on value added requirements necessary to insure success. It includes a process for helping you monitor and control the responsibilities, activities, changes and data for your project.

There are tools included in the appendices that will assist with the project management and implementation of your quality improvement initiatives.

Electronic Clinical Quality Measures:

As noted by CMS in their online eCQI Resource Center, “clinical quality measures (CQMs) allow for performance tracking as improvements are made, and progress toward national shared goals of better care, smarter spending, and healthier people to be quantified.

Electronic clinical quality measures (eCQMs) are a tool used to quantify and track healthcare quality performance in a standard way. eCQMs are derived from information stored in and shared by health IT systems, such as EHRs and patient registries. They convert information about care processes or outcomes into a rate or percentage that allows providers, facilities, and patients to measure and evaluate aspects of care including: clinical management, intervention effectiveness, patient safety, efficient use of health care resources, care coordination, patient and family engagement, population and public health. eCQM reporting, including population health indicators, is required for several federal incentive programs.

Measuring quality provides tangible feedback to clinicians and other health care team members on their improvement efforts. Quality measures also drive provider and facility reimbursement now that federal and private insurers are shifting to value-based payment programs. Measurement is thus a key engine for optimizing healthcare.” <https://ecqi.healthit.gov/>

Since the ability for EHRs to report standard clinical quality measures is part of the process for EHR vendors to obtain CMS/ONC Certification for their products, and the reports should be available in all certified EHRs, this eCQI toolkit and process encourages the use of standardized clinical quality measure (CQMs) whenever possible and appropriate for outcome and process evaluation metrics for your eCQI projects.