



Mountain-Pacific Quality Health and Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS)

eCQI Toolkit Overview

Introduction

Quality improvement (QI) consists of systematic and continuous actions that lead to measurable improvement in health care services and the health status of targeted patient groups (this definition supplied by Health Resources and Services Administration [HRSA]).

Electronic clinical quality improvement (eCQI) is the use of health information technology (HIT), the functionality and data in your electronic health record (EHR) and the clinical best practices to support, leverage and advance your QI initiatives.

This eCQI toolkit was created as a practical guide to assist organizations with leveraging HIT and the plan-do-study-act (PDSA) process improvement methodology to support and advance health QI initiatives. This toolkit is:

- Designed to provide eCQI tools and resources that may be used by organizations to help manage their eCQI priorities in an organized, efficient and repeatable manner
- Developed for use by inpatient and outpatient organizations who are currently utilizing certified EHR software to manage their patient encounters (See Appendix K of this toolkit for more information on certified EHRs.)
- Meant to help identify, align and manage quality initiatives for both internal and external QI goals
- Focused on use of standardized clinical quality measures (CQMs) and tracking and monitoring this data in their EHRs when possible
- Encourages physical, electronic and data workflow review as part of each eCQI project to insure consistent, reliable and quality data and improvement

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eCQI Methodology Overview

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

This toolkit combines aspects of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Model for Improvement, which includes the PDSA quality improvement cycle methodology and the

agile/scrum delivery cycle (created for the IT industry). 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 use 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 an organization approximately every two to six weeks. Sprints also enable an organization to balance improvement initiatives with current workloads. Each sprint should focus on one change (or logical group of changes) and may include one 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 but powerful tool for accelerating change. (See Appendix G of this toolkit for more information about PDSA.) To ensure stabilization of the implemented changes and to spread improvements or best practices once they are defined and proven, we recommend adding phases to stabilize and spread 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 seven basic data collection tools.) This methodology will also incorporate the use of SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-based) goal setting as the foundation for planning and evaluating QI project success. (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 QI initiatives, which focuses on a minimum of structure and documentation and any value-added requirements necessary to ensure success. It includes a process for helping monitor and control responsibilities, activities, changes and data for a QI project.

Tools are included in the appendices to assist with project management and implementation of QI 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 used to quantify and track health care quality performance in a standard way. eCQMs are derived from information stored in and shared by HIT 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. Learn more at <https://ecqi.healthit.gov/>.

Since the ability for EHRs to report standard CQMs is part of the process for EHR vendors to obtain CMS/Office of National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) certification for their products, and since the reports should be available in all certified EHRs, this eCQI toolkit and process encourage the use of standardized CQMs whenever possible and appropriate for outcome and process evaluation metrics for eCQI projects.