

270: CAN WE DO IT BETTER? : BREAKTHROUGH IN SHORTENING THROUGHPUT TIME

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Objective:

The presentation describes a project aimed at shortening wait and delay time for patients with diabetic foot and knee problems, applying best practice and process redesign.

Methods:

Long throughput (wait and delay) time in care delivery results in low service quality and unnecessary suffering for the patient. CBO – Dutch Institute for Health Care Improvement has offered to hospitals in the Netherlands a program aimed at shortening throughput time by implementing best practice and process redesign. Nine (general) hospitals participate in the program, four working on diabetic foot and five on knee problems wait and delay times.

A team of leading national experts evaluates best national and international practice in the field. Change concepts (15) are being developed based on the established best practice. Participating hospitals have to nominate a multidisciplinary change team, taking the ownership of the project and responsibility for change. Supported by the program experts, these teams are then responsible for implementation of the selected change concepts, monitoring and evaluation of results achieved. The plan-do-study-act cycle is used for testing the change concepts. The presentation will include description of teams' activities in hospitals and support provided.

The project covers the time-span of 10 months ending in June 2002.

Results:

The expert team of the program was able to define expected (strive) results, as at least 50% reduction of throughput time. For diabetic foot goals include also seeing all patients within 1 week of the referral and reduction in amputations (50%); for knee problems reduction of wait and delay time from 4 to 7 months to less than one month, reduction of diagnostic procedures and reduction of hospital visits.

Conclusions:

Many health care institutions are hampered with long waiting and delay times. Both national and international experience demonstrate that it is often not enough to constantly improve the performance in the process, rather a whole process has to be redesigned in order to achieve breakthrough improvements.