Root Cause Analysis: A Tool in the Healthcare Safety Journey

There are multiple tools available to healthcare leaders for conducting safety investigations and analyses. Among them, Root Cause Analysis (RCA) remains one of the most powerful, and an important step on any organization's internal education and safety journey. But it is essential to the conducting of useful and informative RCAs to have an application that is user-friendly and encourages reporting.

Incident reporting is just the beginning of the adverse event analysis process, and paves the way for more in-depth systematic analysis tools and processes which can more acutely determine the causation of a patient safety event. Clarity's SafetyZone RCA module, when used effectively, is a powerful means by which we can deeply focus on systems and process breakdowns and drive at the causal factors behind an adverse event, regardless of its severity.

RCAs can be performed on just about any adverse situation, not only harmful events, but also chronic issues, or even near misses. By following a good step-by-step process, organizations can identify very real factors leading to an event, and crucially, they can then begin to develop targeted actions to reduce, mitigate, or altogether eliminate the likelihood of future occurrences.

The RCA tool that Clarity has developed incorporates thinking and pathway algorithms that have been derived from the nation's largest health systems as well as federal agencies. And while many of our organizations utilize the RCA tool within our HealthCare SafetyZone platform, we think it is still underutilized. That's why we're committed here at Clarity to furthering awareness and assistance in the RCA process, and helping in analyzing and/or developing sound action planning post-RCA activity wherever possible.

In addition to enhancing patient safety, there are multiple other key benefits of conducting RCAs through the SafetyZone platform:

Operational
- Improving Quality of Care
- Fostering a Culture of Accountability and Learning
- Reducing Cost and Increasing Efficiency
- Complying with Regulatory Reporting
- Involving Staff in Decision Making

Technical
- All RCAs are associated with adverse events in the same system
- Incidents, near-misses (good catches), and unsafe conditions can all be easily identified

- Every question and answer is capable of detailed analysis
  - Everything is filter-able
  - Everything is query-able
- Meta-analysis can be performed to identify trends associated/identified through the RCA data collection and process itself
- Tasks and next steps can be easily assigned, tracked, and monitored to maintain accountability

Clinical
- Workflows can be outlined and improved
- Actions plans can be documented in the same system
  - Tasks/assignments, follow-ups
  - Timelines with detailed planning steps beyond the proverbial "We need to train/re-train staff"

Root Cause Analysis is a fundamental part of healthcare and can enhance safety, quality of care, and organizational efficiency. Furthermore, you can create a protected learning environment with the additional participation in Clarity's Patient Safety Organization. By addressing events in a systematic fashion, RCA not only helps to prevent recurrence but also fosters a culture of learning and accountability. Implementation of a robust RCA process is essential and will help healthcare organizations achieve sustained improvement and deliver safer and more effective care to their patient populations.

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