

DIAGNOSIS DELAYED

Young patient accused of "putting symptoms on"

Cause Map

Sixteen-year-old patient suffering from rare cancer gets an MRI (and a diagnosis) only after 24 visits to 13 doctors over 11 months.

"We'll never know what had happened if she'd been given an MRI scan when we first asked for one." - Patient's mother

Cause Mapping is a Root Cause Analysis method that captures basic cause-and-effect relationships supported with evidence.

CAUSE MAPPING

Problem Solving • Incident Investigation • Root Cause Analysis

- Step 1 **Problem** What's the Problem?
- Step 2 **Analysis** Why did it happen?
- Step 3 **Solutions** What will be done?

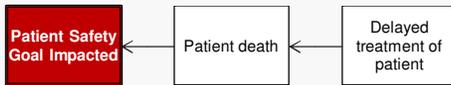
1 Problem

What	Problem(s)	Patient death, delayed diagnosis
When	Date	January 24, 2013
	Different, unusual, unique	Patient seen by 13 doctors 24 times
Where	Facility, site	Various facilities, practitioners
	Unit, area, equipment	MRI
	Task being performed	Tumor from rare cancer
Impact to the Goals		
	Patient Safety	Patient death
	Compliance	?
	Patient Services	Delayed treatment of patient
	Frequency	Wrong diagnosis common issue

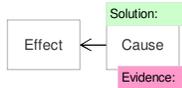
2 Analysis

Basic Level Cause Map - Start with simple Why questions.

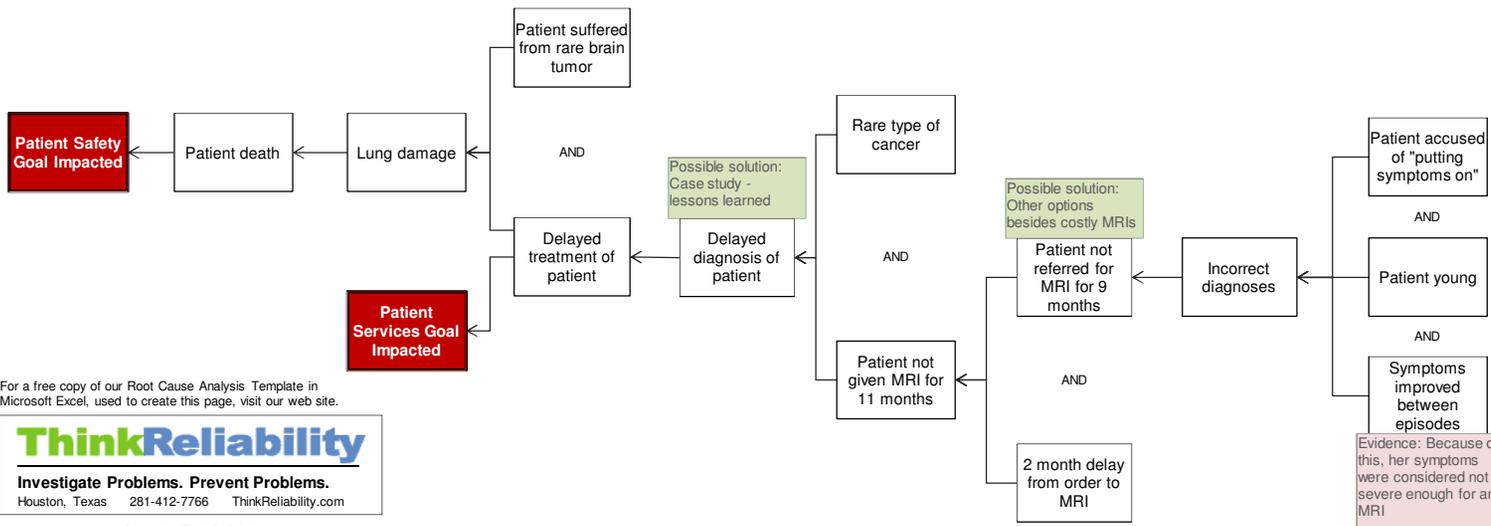
Basic Cause-and-Effect



It's unclear if earlier diagnosis would have saved the life of the patient. Though the prognosis is poor for a leptomeningeal tumor, a oligodendroglioma that is treated before it is disseminated gives a long-term survival chance of 80-100%. The tumor had disseminated once it was found on the MRI, eleven



More Detailed Cause Map - Add detail as information becomes available.



3 Solutions

If an MRI is denied, other cheaper alternatives, such as a CT scan, should be considered. A more thorough review of "the flaws in the system and human errors that led to the failure of 13 doctors to order a diagnostic MRI that would have resulted in emergency treatment earlier in the disease's progression" may help "ensure that in the future, scans are not withheld from patients with potentially life-threatening conditions", possibly saving a life. (Quotes from Suzanne Leigh in "How Did 13 Docs Fail to Diagnose Teen's Fatal Tumor?")

For a free copy of our Root Cause Analysis Template in Microsoft Excel, used to create this page, visit our web site.

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