

1 Problem

What	Problem(s)	Removed limb not preserved for burial as requested by patient
When	Date	March 1, 2011
	Time	?
Where	Different, unusual, unique	Patient requested limb for burial (removed body parts are typically disposed of)
	Facility, site	Chicago, Illinois area hospital
	Unit, area, equipment	Left leg
	Task being performed	Amputated below the knee

Impact to the Goals

Patient Safety	None	
Employee Safety	None	
Environmental	None	
Compliance	Lawsuit against hospital	\$100,000
Patient Services	Patient request not heeded	
	Patient did not understand release forms	
Schedule/ Operations	?	
Property/ Equipment	?	
Labor/ Time	?	
Frequency	Unknown	This incident \$100,000 Annualized Cost ?

Beginning with an impacted goal, asking why questions will develop cause-and-effect relationships. For example, asking the question "Why were the patient's requests not heeded?" results in the cause "Patient's leg was cremated." The patient's leg was cremated because there appears to be no procedure for ensuring limbs are saved if requested because typical practice is to dispose of removed limbs. Additionally, the patient signed two release forms which stated the hospital could dispose of the removed portion of the leg.

Clearly the patient did not understand the release forms, as he wanted the leg to be saved, not disposed of. This is another impact to the patient services goal. The patient is legally blind, and so was unable to effectively read the release forms himself. In the lawsuit, the patient claims that the nurse who presented him with the forms explained them as consent forms for surgery and did not discuss that the forms also addressed disposal of the limb that would be removed.

Because the request for the leg was unusual, if the nurse who described the release forms was unaware of the request, it seems understandable that the portion discussing the disposal of the removed limbs (as was done in almost all cases), would not have stood out as something that the patient needed to have summarized.

3 Solutions

The hospital has not discussed what steps it will take to reduce the likelihood of this type of issue recurring in the future. However, some steps that may reduce the risk are to develop a procedure that would ensure special requests for removed body parts in surgery are followed. Additionally, having release forms read out loud completely for patients who are unable to read the forms themselves would allow those patients to know all of what they are signing.

AMPUTED LEG CREMATED

Orthodox Jewish patient had requested for burial

When a patient at a Chicago-area hospital had to have a portion of his leg amputated, he requested that it be returned to him for burial in accordance with his religious beliefs. The hospital cremated it instead, and the patient has sued the hospital and the hospital rabbi, whom the patient informed of his desires. The lawsuit was dismissed but an appeals court sent the case back for trial.

The patient, who is legally blind, signed two release forms allowing for disposal of the removed limb. The patient has claimed in a lawsuit that the forms were described only as consent forms for surgery to remove the leg.

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

CAUSE MAPPING

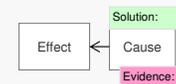
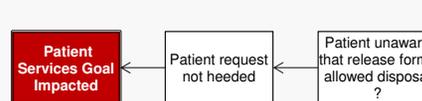
Problem Solving • Incident Investigation • Root Cause Analysis

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

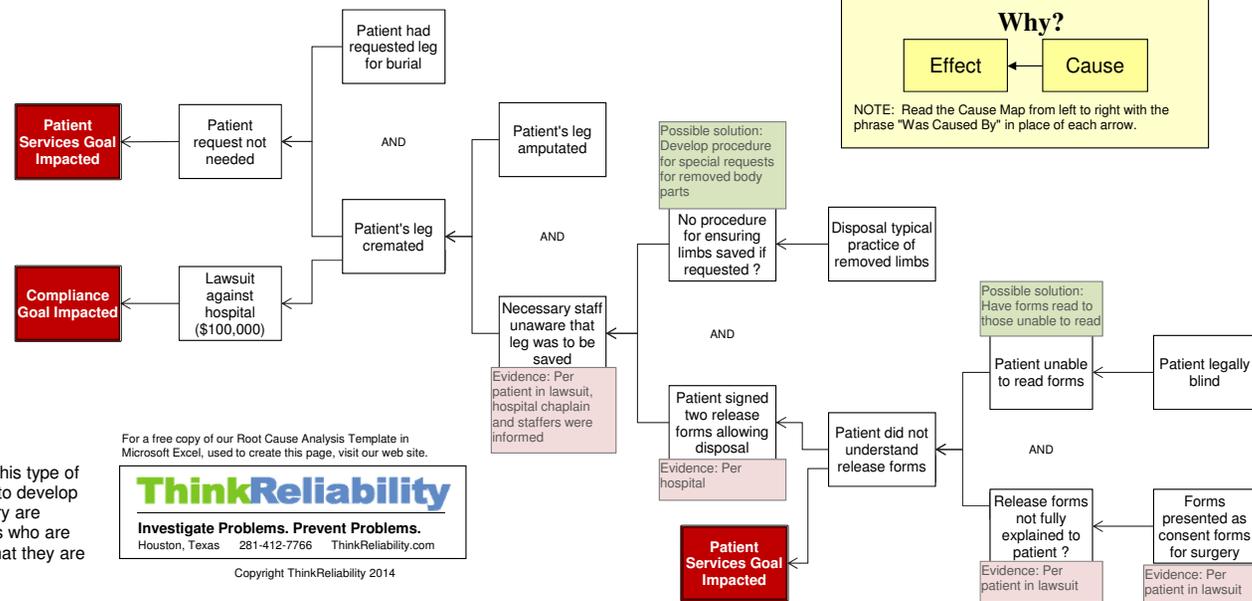
2 Analysis

Basic Level Cause Map - Start with simple Why questions.

Basic Cause-and-Effect



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



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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