

Step 1. Outline the Problem

What	Problem(s)	Patients treated by physician impersonator
When	Date	December 7-8, 2006
	Time	Overnight shift
	Differences	Teenager intercepted Dr's pages
Where	Physical Location	Hospital
	Work/Task Being Done	Paging physicians

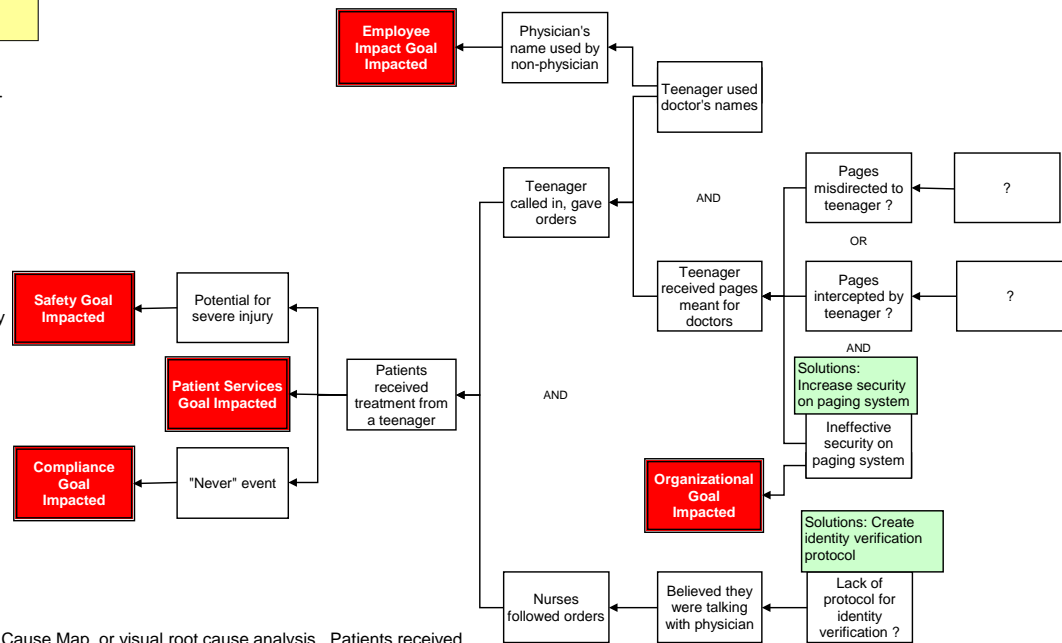
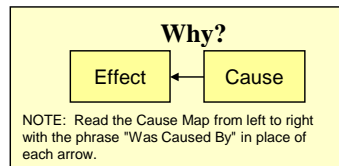
Impact to the Goals

Safety - Patient	Potential for severe injury (no actual)
Employee Impact	Physician's name used by non-physician
Compliance	"Never" event
Organization	Ineffective security on paging system
Patient Services	Patients received treatment from a teenager

First we outline the problem. The issue here is care to patients ordered by a physician impersonator. It happened on the overnight shift in December, 2006 at a hospital. The hospital had been paging physicians requesting their medical advice.

Next we define the problem in the context of the organization's overall goals. The patient safety goal was impacted because of the potential to harm patients. (Surprisingly, the advice that the physician impersonator ordered was consistent with standard treatment and did not result in harm to any patients.) The employee impact goal was affected because a physician's name was used by a non-physician. The compliance goal was impacted because this is a "never event". The organizational goal was impacted because of ineffective security on the paging system. Lastly, the patient services goal was impacted because patients received treatments ordered by a teenager.

Step 2. Create the Cause Map



Cause Map Detail Level



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These goals form the basis for our Cause Map, or visual root cause analysis. Patients received orders from a teenager because the teenager gave orders, and because the nurses followed it. The nurses followed the advice because they believed they were talking with a physician, likely because no identity verification protocol was used. The teenager was able to give orders because he used a physician's name and received pages meant for the physician. It is unclear whether the pages were intercepted, or misdirected, but the security on the paging system was ineffective, since the teenager was able to receive the pages.

When we put this all together, we have a very basic Cause Map. Even more detail can be added to this Cause Map as the analysis continues. As with any investigation the level of detail in the analysis is based on the impact of the incident on the organization's overall goals. Once the desired level of detail is attained, we can look for solutions. Some solutions in this case are to develop an identification verification protocol, and improve the security of the paging system.

Physician Impersonation

On an overnight shift in December, 2006, nurses received medical instructions they thought came from a physician and carried them out. It turned out that those instructions had been issued by a teenager, using the physician's name, who had somehow intercepted pages meant for a physician.

Any instance of care provided by someone impersonating medical staff is a never event, as defined by The Joint Commission. Because of this and the potential for patient harm, medical facilities must do all they can to ensure it never happens. We will perform a root cause analysis to gain some insight from this situation, so that we can apply it to our own facilities and prevent it from happening there. A thorough root cause analysis built as a Cause Map can capture all of the causes in a simple, intuitive format that fits on one page.

Step 3. Solutions

Corrective Actions to be taken from this Incident that are Causally Re

No.	Cause	Action Item
1	Ineffective security on paging system	Increase security on paging system
2	Lack of protocol for identity verification ?	Create identity verification protocol