Problem

What

Problem(s)

Patient death, delayed diagnosis

When

Date

January 24, 2013

Patient seen by 13 doctors 24 times

Where

Various facilities, practitioners

Facility, site

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

Analysis

Basic Level Cause Map - Start with simple Why questions.

It's unclear if earlier diagnosis would have saved the life of the patient. Though the prognosis is poor for a leptomeningeal tumor, an 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 months later.

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

DIAGNOSIS DELAYED

Young patient accused of "putting symptoms on"

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

Timeline

Date

2008

2010

February 2012

November 2012

January 2013

January 16, 2013

January 24, 2013

September 19, 2013

Description

Patient begins seeking treatment for symptoms

Symptoms get much worse

Patient seen by specialist; diagnosed with migraines

Patient sees 13 doctors over 24 visits

Specialist orders MRI

MRI takes place

Patient diagnosed with leptomeningeal tumor

Patient receives two emergency operations

Patient dies

Inquest into patient's death

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?")