DELAYED VETERAN CARE

Cause Map

Veteran waiting 2.5 years for biopsy ends up losing most of his nose

Insufficient capacity of the Veterans Administration (VA) hospital in Phoenix, Arizona resulted in veterans waiting months or even years for care. In the case discussed here, a veteran waited over two years for a biopsy of his cancerous nose. Most of his nose then had to be removed.

"I think it's unfair to call any of this a success when Veterans are waiting 6 weeks on an electronic waiting list before they're called to schedule their first PCP (Primary Care Physician) appointment."

- Internal Phoenix VA email dated July 3, 2013

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)	Delay in cancer treatment; lost most of nose
When	Date	?
	Time	?
	Different, unusual, unique	Use of doctored waiting lists (per whistleblower)
Where	Facility, site	Phoenix, AZ
	Unit, area, equipment	Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital
	Task being performed	Cancer treatment

Impact to the Goals

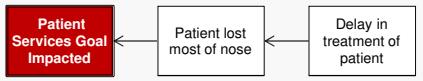
Patient Safety	Spread of cancer
Employee Safety	?
Environmental	?
Compliance	?
Patient Services	Patient lost most of nose
Schedule/ Operations	Delay in treatment of patient
Property/ Equipment	?
Labor/ Time	?

Frequency	At least 28 other veterans found to have "clinically significant delays" at same facility by government

2 Analysis

Effect ← Cause (Solution: / Evidence:)

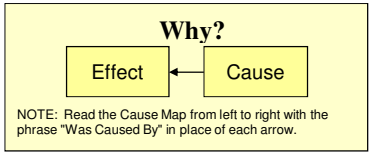
Basic Level Cause Map - Start with simple Why questions.

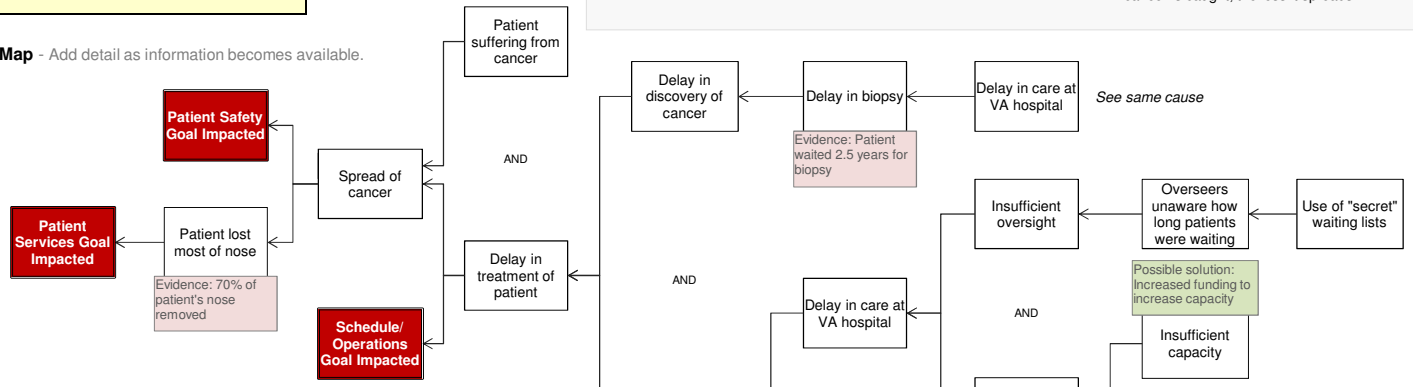


Basic Cause-and-Effect

The Inspector General examined dozens of cases of patients who died while waiting for care at the Phoenix VA hospital but was unable to determine if the deaths were due to the delays. In a case like this, involving the diagnosis of cancer, it's generally acknowledged that the earlier the cancer is caught, the less it spreads.

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





3 Solutions

As expected, the results of these investigations have resulted in a number of personnel being removed from their positions in the VA. The "secret" waiting lists were used to hide the fact that the VA hospitals don't appear to have the capacity for the number of veterans that need treatment. Significant additional funding is being directed towards the VA in order to build more hospitals and hire additional medical staff. In the meantime (and possibly continuing into the future if capacity continues to be inadequate), arrangements for veterans to receive covered care at other facilities are being made.

In light of these highly publicized issues, hopefully the VA will receive the funding and oversight it needs so that the nation's veterans can receive the care they deserve.

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

ThinkReliability

Investigate Problems. Prevent Problems.

Houston, Texas 281-412-7766 ThinkReliability.com