SAMPLE SWITCH Cause Map

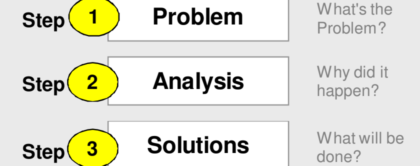
Patient receives unneeded mastectomy

Delay in needed surgery for another patient

"Human error is always a possibility. But one of the things we strive for is to ensure there are appropriate controls in place to ensure that the risk of these things is absolutely minimized."

- Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter

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



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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1 Problem

What	Problem(s)	Pathology results switched; wrong care given
When	Date	Late April, 2013
	Different, unusual, unique	Recording error; pathology results switched
Where	State, city	Nova Scotia
	Facility, site	Cancer Center
	Unit, area, equipment	Tissue sample
	Task being performed	Oversight sample analysis

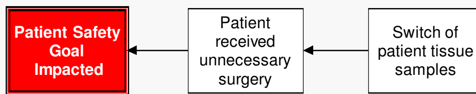
Impact to the Goals

Patient Safety	Patient 1 received unnecessary surgery
	Patient 2 did not receive necessary surgery
Employee Impact	Staff devastated
Organization	Apology from health authority
Patient Services	Switch of patient tissue samples
Property, Equip, Mtls	Unnecessary procedure performed
Labor, Time	Investigation

Frequency	Previous unnecessary mastectomy in 2003 (related to different cause)

2 Analysis

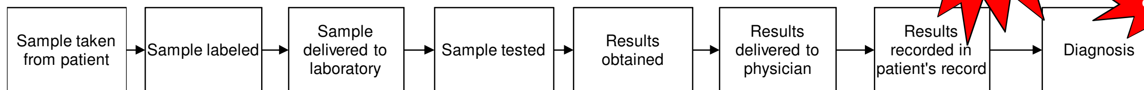
Basic Level Cause Map - Start with simple Why questions.

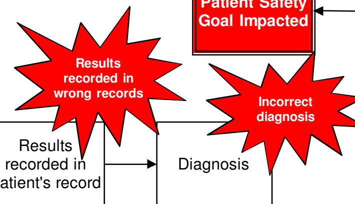


Basic Cause-and-Effect

A patient received an unneeded mastectomy after her lab samples were switched with another patient's. A previous unnecessary mastectomy in the region occurred in 2003, and another sample identification error occurred the next month, resulting in an unnecessary biopsy.

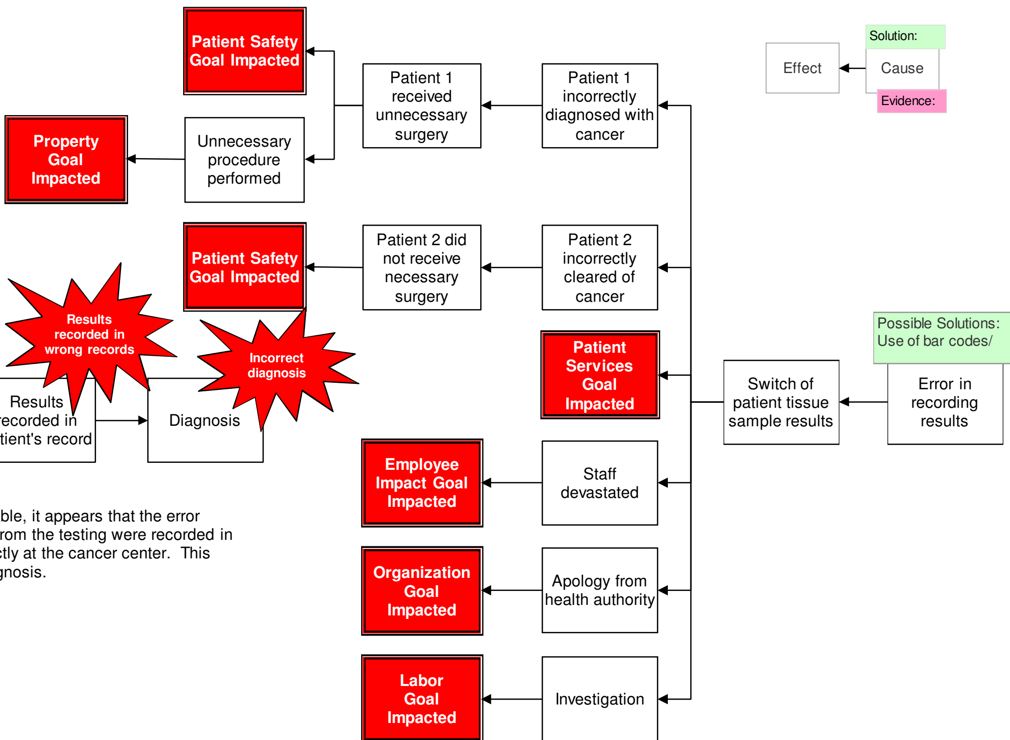
Process Map - Sampling Process





From the information available, it appears that the error occurred when the results from the testing were recorded in the patients' charts incorrectly at the cancer center. This resulted in an incorrect diagnosis.

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



3 Solutions

The healthcare system involved in the error is in the process of instituting bar codes for sampling and an automated process. In general, a bar coding process is less prone to error because less entry of data is required.