

Pharmacist quick reference guide to quality improvement activities

Quality improvement is the continuous process of identifying, analysing, and implementing changes to enhance patient care, safety, and outcomes.

Form a QI team

- **Team composition:** Include members already involved in the system or process being improved. A diverse team brings different perspectives and expertise, leading to a more effective QI activity.
- **Team responsibilities:** Collaborate to plan, implement, review, and document the QI activity. Allocating protected time for the team to focus on QI activities can promote a culture of quality within the broader team.
- **Executive sponsor:** Identify an executive sponsor for the QI activity to allocate resources, provide support and alignment with organisational strategy, and manage any associated risks.

Use the [Model for Improvement \(MFI\) framework](#) to structure quality improvement activities:

- **Thinking part:** conceptualising the improvement
- **Doing part:** implementing changes using [Plan-Do-Study-Act \(PDSA\)](#) cycles.

Project brief template

Capture and structure your objectives, measures, and intended outcomes.

Step 1: Thinking part

Set aims

Answer the question - what are we trying to achieve?

Set aims that are:

- **Safe:** prevent patient injuries from intended care
- **Effective:** provide scientifically matched care; avoid ineffective and underused treatments.
- **Patient-centred:** respect individual choices.
- **Timely:** minimise waiting times for patients and caregivers.
- **Efficient:** eliminate waste.
- **Equitable:** close health gaps across racial, ethnic, and gender lines.

Consider costs: to patient, the organisation, and/or the wider healthcare system.

Use the **S.M.A.R.T. goal framework:** Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

Establish measures

Answer the question - how will we know that a change is an improvement?

Use qualitative (descriptive) or quantitative (numerical) data.

Measure types:

- **Outcome measures:** indicate how a system is working and the impact on patients. This should link back to the numeric goal.
- **Process measures:** are we on track in our efforts to improve the system?
- **Balancing measures:** are changes designed to improve one part of the system causing new problems in other parts?

Collect, record and track your data.

Identify changes

Answer the question - what change can we make that will result in improvement?



Step 2: Doing part

Use Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles to test the identified ideas for change. This often requires multiple cycles for complete testing and refinement.

Plan

Define the idea being tested.
Identify who will execute it, when, and where.
Confirm the timeframe and data to be collected.
Predict the outcome.
Start with small, short-duration tests.

Do

Execute the plan.
Note any unexpected events or problems.

Study

Review and reflect on the results.
Compare data and outcomes to predictions.

Act

Decide what you will take forward (**adopt**), what you will refine (**adapt**) and what you will discard (**abandon**).
Prepare a plan for the next test.

Implement changes

- Establish infrastructure and support to sustain changes.

Share information

- Inform the wider team at each stage of the QI activity.