Tips and Tools for Learning Improvement

Answer Key | Developing Changes

Exercise 1: Choosing a problem and first step

Team Member 1	Team Member 2	Team Member 3
"This is unacceptable. The staff were trained in the new guidelines a few months ago, and there is no reason why they should be continuing to rely on mRDT or simply treating on suspicion. We need to review the records and find out who is responsible and tell them that they have to follow the guidelines or else there will be consequences. We can check again in a few weeks to make sure that they have started following the guidelines."	"We really need to ask management to hire more people. The laboratory needs someone who can focus on microscopy and diagnosing malaria. We should make sure that there is a microscope purchased and dedicated to malaria diagnosis since it is so common. It would also help to hire someone to be responsible for taking smears to the lab and then waiting for the results and bringing them back to the clinician or nurse. This would mean samples don't get lost."	"This analysis shows a lack of clarification in the process of taking samples and testing by the lab. It would probably help for us to clarify the process. I think I heard about another hospital that had a similar problem but was able to solve it. Maybe we could talk to their team to get ideas. Let's choose one of these problems to start with and think of ideas that might help solve the problem. We can brainstorm some ideas of what would work in our ward."
Punishing individuals in a system does not address the underlying problem in the process. Telling people to work more, better, faster, etc. does not usually lead to any sustained change or improvement.	*It is important that the facility has all of the resources that it needs to complete its tasks. However, simply hiring more people or buying more equipment will not likely solve the problem in this case, which is a lack of clarity on the process by which samples are collected, sent to the lab, analyzed, and the results returned to the provider. Once the team has clarified and improved the process, then they will be able to better determine if more staff or equipment are needed.*	*This is the best approach to the problem described. The problem here is a lack of clarity in the process of collecting samples, sending them to the laboratory, analyzing them, and sending the results back to the provider. If they develop and test changes to improve each step in the process, they will achieve more sustainable results. Before developing changes, some root cause analysis or flowcharting will help them better understand the problem.*

Exercise 2: Matching a problem with a change idea

A neonatal intensive care unit is having a hard time ensuring sterile care while putting in central lines. There are several problems. Draw a line between the problem and the change idea that would best address the problem.

Problems	Change ideas
Staff are unaware of the extent of the problem related to line infections.	Change protocol to allow use of alcohol hand wash instead of soap and water.
Staff do not know the correct steps for sterile technique when putting in a central line.	Create central line tray with all required equipment.
The sink is in another room, and it is hard to reach when emergencies come up.	Collect and display number of line infections weekly.
Supplies for central lines are kept in different places so can't be gathered quickly.	Develop central line protocol. Train staff on the protocol and the importance of adhering to the protocol.

Exercise 3: Determining the best change idea

For the following scenarios, choose which change idea is most likely to address the problem.

Scenario 1

☐ Head of the health center writes policy that oxytocin should be given

☐ Head of the health center trains staff on importance of oxytocin

✓ Midwife preloads syringe with oxytocin and keeps it on a cold pack by the bedside for each delivery

Scenario 2

☐ Put up poster informing nurses to wrap babies before other procedures

✓ Re-organize equipment so that cord clamp is kept under the towels for wrapping newborns

☐ Have nurse in charge observe deliveries and give performance reviews

Scenario 3

☐ Tell patients to not skip the station

☐ Do not give drugs to patients who have skipped the station

✓ Move the place for assessing height and weight right next to the registration desk

Exercise 4: Prioritizing a change idea

Team Member 1	Team Member 2	Team Member 3
"We are having a lot of trouble figuring out what to do. I think we should just ask the head of the facility to make a decision. He hasn't been part of these discussions, so he will have fresh eyes on the situation."	"We all seem to have different opinions on what is best to do. Let's just vote on it and everyone can accept that the idea with the highest vote wins. It isn't hard to choose between these three."	"These all have implications for health worker time, patient acceptance, management support, pharmacy supply chain planning, and other resources. I think we should use a prioritization matrix to weight the options and determine what is most likely to be successful for everyone involved."
If the facility head has not been involved in the discussions of the problem or solutions, that person may not be informed enough to make the decision. While sometimes it is appropriate to have an expert on the team make a decision, there is no evidence to show that the facility head is the expert in this situation.	*The team could take a vote, but that may not be the best option in this case as each of these changes has implications on resources, patient acceptance, rules and regulations, etc. A vote may result in deciding on the most popular change, but it may not address all of the concerns of the team members.*	*This is the best answer for this situation. When the problem and solutions are both complex, a priority matrix allows you to analyze the solutions to determine what your best option is. All of these are big changes to the current process, and thinking through carefully which idea best addresses the problem(s) will result in a more appropriate change.*