QI Basics

**Five Whys Worksheet**

Use this analysis technique and worksheet to help the team identify the root cause of the problem.

## Introduction

The Five Whys analysis technique focuses on a problem by asking multiple “Why?” questions or “What caused this problem?” to identify the root cause. When asking the questions, include team members with personal knowledge of the processes and systems involved in the problem being discussed. This technique works well if the problem is simple. If, after asking “Why?” several times, and the answer does not seem correct, further analysis may be needed. The more complex the problem, the more likely it will take further analysis to reach the root cause.

## How to Use

The project team should complete this tool.

* Develop a clear and specific problem statement.
* The team facilitator asks why the problem happened and records the team response. Ask the team to consider “If this [the most recent team response] were corrected, is it likely the problem would recur?” If the answer is yes, this is a contributing factor, not a root cause.
* If the answer provided is a contributing factor to the problem, the team keeps asking “Why?” until there is agreement from the team that the root cause has been identified, and if corrected, the problem would not recur.
* It often takes three to five times of asking “Why?” But it can take more than five. Keep going until the team agrees the root cause has been identified.

An [example](#example) Five Whys Worksheet is provided at the end of this document for your reference.

## Five Whys Worksheet

### Team Members:

### Date:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Problem statement**  |  |
| ***Why?* C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\OFFICE12\Bullets\BD21298_.gif** |  |
| ***Why? C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\OFFICE12\Bullets\BD21298_.gif*** |  |
| ***Why? C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\OFFICE12\Bullets\BD21298_.gif*** |  |
| ***Why? C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\OFFICE12\Bullets\BD21298_.gif*** |  |
| ***Why? C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\OFFICE12\Bullets\BD21298_.gif*** |  |
| ***Root Cause(s)***  |  |

## Example Five Whys Worksheet

### Team Members: All QI team members that are part of the NQF0018 improvement project.

### Date: XX/XX/2019

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Problem statement**  | We are trying to improve our NQF 0018 metric and improve our clinic’s ability to properly identify and diagnose hypertensive patients. Our goal will be to improve our facilities current performance rate from 45% to 55% within 1 month starting the first day next month. We think we may have issues with the overall BP check process.Why isn’t our hypertension process working to produce an optimal result or high performance on the hypertension 0018 measure? |
| ***Why?* C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\OFFICE12\Bullets\BD21298_.gif** | We don’t have regular training as well as policies and procedures around BP checks and documentation. |
| ***Why? C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\OFFICE12\Bullets\BD21298_.gif*** | We don’t have consistency around how we document and implement our policies and procedures. |
| ***Why? C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\OFFICE12\Bullets\BD21298_.gif*** | We have a culture of letting all providers practice independently and they instruct the nurses and medical assistants to adapt to their individual practice approaches. |
| ***Why? C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\OFFICE12\Bullets\BD21298_.gif*** | Our clinic manager doesn’t have the time or attention to create these policies and procedures and have clinicians confirm and utilized them |
| ***Why? C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\OFFICE12\Bullets\BD21298_.gif*** |  |
| ***Root Cause(s)***  | 1. Blood pressures may not be documented correctly in the electronic health record
2. There may be inconsistencies in how BP is documented from clinician to clinician

To validate root causes, ask the following: “If you removed this root cause, would this event or problem have been prevented?” |