



Executive Summary

Improving the Science of Continuous Quality Improvement Program and Evaluation

Improving the Science of Continuous Quality Improvement Program and Evaluation funded teams of researchers to address a core question within health care environments: “How will we know that a change is an improvement?” Research teams tackled an array of projects aimed at improving evaluation frameworks, quality improvement measures, and data collection and methodology. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) authorized the program for up to \$1.5 million for 48 months, from August 2007 through August 2011.

[Read the full report.](#)

CONTEXT

Continuous quality improvement (CQI) strategies have had limited success in improving the overall quality of health care. Researchers have found numerous barriers to the effective use of CQI. These include a mismatch between conventional clinical research methods (such as randomized, controlled trials) and the more process-oriented CQI work, as well as a lack of opportunities for CQI practitioners, researchers, and consumers to examine peer-reviewed investigations of the success or failure of alternative CQI strategies.

THE PROGRAM

RWJF awarded nine grants, ranging from \$50,000 to \$245,000, to:

- Create a framework to identify, classify, and evaluate quality improvement initiatives (one project)
- Develop new quality improvement measures (five projects)
- Address data collection and analysis methodologies (three projects).

KEY RESULTS

The research teams:

- Created a screening tool to empirically evaluate the CQI literature
- Established the reliability and validity of a scale that measures “systems thinking”—one of the mechanisms by which CQI processes achieve their results
- Produced a reliable and valid instrument to measure key features of primary care practices that influence the adoption and implementation of new knowledge
- Developed and tested a framework to study, understand, and optimize contextual factors that impact a quality improvement project’s likelihood of success
- Improved the Team Check-up Tool, which measures the impact of the traits and activities of the quality improvement team on CQI initiatives
- Created a model that identifies the factors that enhance or inhibit the ability of primary care practices to integrate and sustain CQI efforts
- Developed more reliable metrics to enhance the quality and generalizability of findings from common targets of quality improvement research (such as fall reduction and ventilator-associated pneumonia prevention)
- Investigated the shortcomings of industrial and manufacturing quality assurance techniques (called statistical process control) when applied to health care data
- Designed and implemented a software tool to help health care organizations detect changes in organizational performance during the introduction of new technology or when changes are made to a current process or work flow
- RWJF created an online community called ASQIRE—Advancing Science of Quality Improvement Research and Evaluation. Its aim is to encourage ongoing connection among the grantees of its quality improvement-focused programs as well as with other quality improvement researchers and practitioners.

AFTERWARD

RWJF created an online community called ASQIRE—Advancing Science of Quality Improvement Research and Evaluation. Its aim is to encourage ongoing connection among the grantees of its quality improvement-focused programs as well as with other quality improvement researchers and practitioners.

Program management: Managed internally at RWJF

Program Officer: Lori Melichar
