

CQI AWARENESS MONTH – MAY 2019

Our CQI programme



Dr Berenice Lopez

As part of our programme to promote continuous quality improvement (CQI), we are designating May CQI awareness month. This introduction sets the scene for the articles which follow.

The belief that there is an opportunity for improvement in every process and on every occasion underpins CQI. This mindset is essential in health-care, particularly when it comes to patient safety – in our increasingly complex, interdependent work settings, new threats to patient safety are continually emerging, leaving no room for complacency.

There is a science to improvement. While its scientific principles differ from those of controlled trials, the same rigour in application is required. The range of different tools and techniques includes total quality management, the Model for Improvement, Lean and Six Sigma. Interestingly, there is no clear evidence that one approach is superior to others. Rather, maintaining a systematic and thorough approach to quality improvement and applying this consistently is what matters. There are some key principles that are common to all, including giving staff at all levels the opportunity to contribute and act on ideas for improvement, using data to understand variation, applying many small-scale tests of change as a way to learn and a relentless focus on the needs and experiences of patients and staff.

No quality improvement approach, however, can succeed without good leadership. This requires skills in change management including awareness of the importance of engaging stakeholders, the need for alignment of CQI work to wider system priorities and the importance of culture. The potential rewards are great. When done well, CQI can help change the culture of a system – whether this is a single team, a department, an organisation or even a whole health economy – enabling curiosity, engagement, proactive learning and innovation to flourish.

The NHS has long recognised the value of CQI, adopting policies aimed at embedding CQI at all levels and across all services. This may be taking time to percolate through pathology. We know from a College survey from 2016 that most people are familiar with the principles and practice of audit, but there is relatively low awareness and experience of the components of CQI methodology. In view of these findings, the College has set about developing a programme of work to promote CQI in pathology. The theme for this section of the *Bulletin* is part of a programme of publications

and events to raise awareness of the value of CQI, encourage pathologists to undertake and submit their own CQI activities, and make members aware of the College's resources in this area, including mentoring and certification schemes. Importantly, the programme will help support doctors in training to demonstrate that they are participating in activity to improve the quality and safety of patient care and clinical outcomes as outlined in the General Medical Council Generic Professional Capabilities Framework.

The articles that follow offer useful advice on implementing CQI in cellular pathology and reports from a mentor and mentee on their experiences of the College's CQI mentoring scheme. This partnership arrangement provides support to members seeking to develop or improve their CQI skills. It operates by matching potential mentees with experienced mentors. We hope these articles inspire you to get involved.

The College's CQI awareness month will run in May. It will include a series of podcasts with leading pathologists discussing the impact of their improvement work and an expert-led webinar series on key tools for improvement.

There will also be a 'quality improvement at work' competition to recognise excellence in CQI. If you know an inspirational colleague who has led an improvement project, consider nominating them (with their permission). Visit www.rcpath.org/CQIaware for a copy of the form, which must be submitted by 1 May 2019 to: CQIawareness@rcpath.org

In addition, for those yet to be converted to the 'life-changing magic of tidying up', there is a 5S (sort, set in order, shine, standardise and sustain) work surface social media challenge. Watch the video and share your 'before and after' work surface photographs on Twitter using #5SMyDesk – the highest number of retweets and likes (i.e. the most shared post) will win the prize.

Find out more about our CQI awareness month at: www.rcpath.org/CQIaware

Dr Berenice Lopez
Clinical Director of Safety and Quality

Look out for our CQI awareness month logo across the range of our activities in May.

