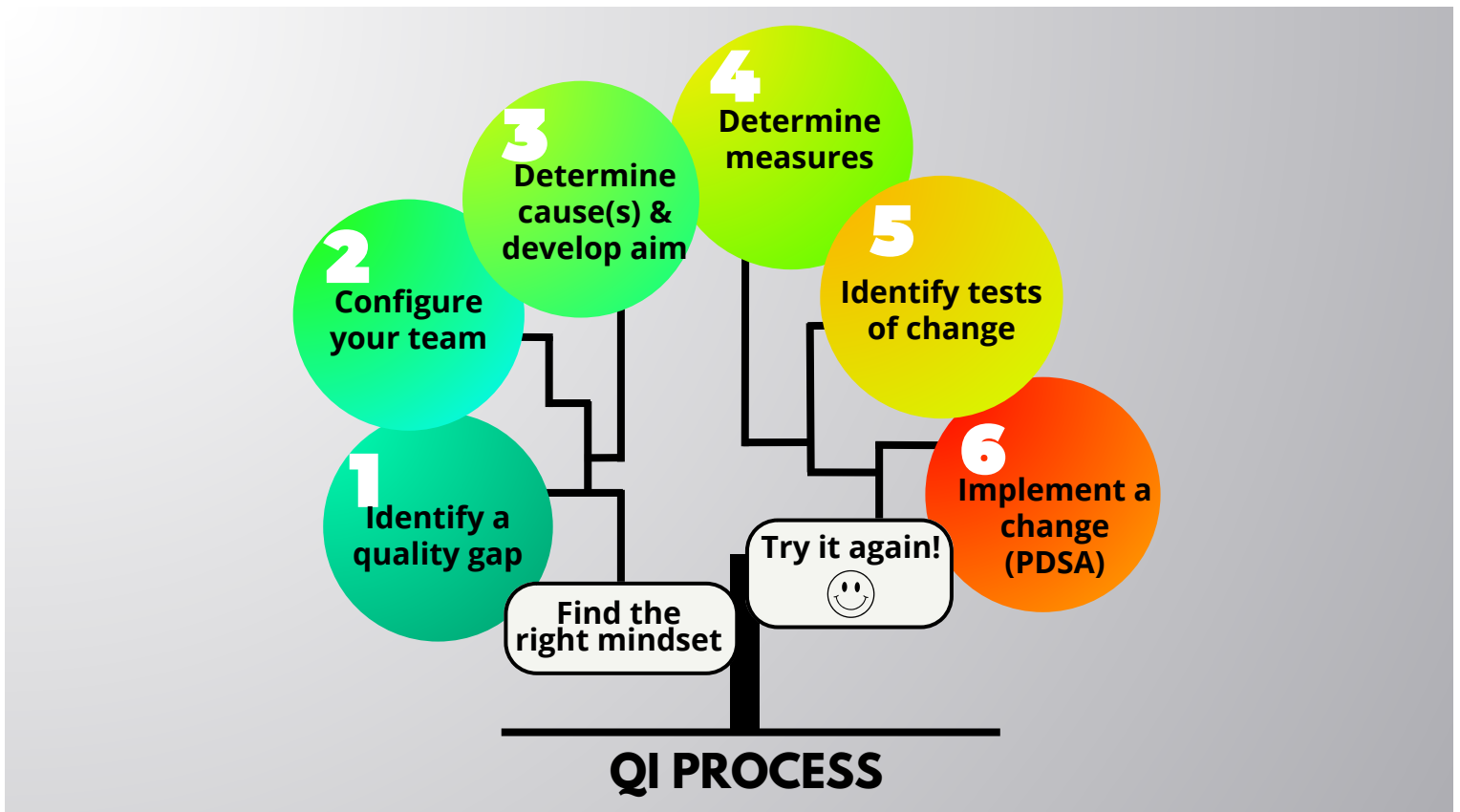


QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Quality improvement (QI) is an increasingly emphasized practice across all healthcare professions, including athletic training, and is defined as “the work of all stakeholders, including patients, families, administrative support, and health care providers, to promote better patient outcomes, system performance, and professional development.”¹ In short, QI is a structured process designed to produce measurable improvements in the delivery of health care services. QI initiatives identify a quality gap - an aspect of healthcare delivery that compromises one or more aspects of quality care, such as safety, timeliness, effectiveness, efficiency, equitability, and/or patient-centeredness (STEEEP).² Despite the value of QI, many clinicians are new to the process of conducting a QI initiative.³

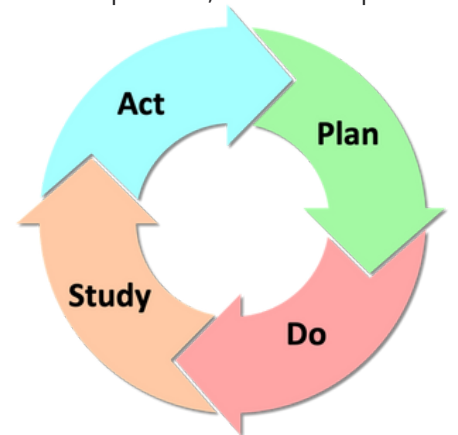


from RECENT ARTICLES

"Looking to Improve Your Practice? Consider the Science of Quality Improvement to Get Started" *Snyder Valier, 2020.*

QI initiatives are often miscategorized as research. While there are some overlapping features (e.g., both are publishable), they are different processes with different outcomes. Beyond distinguishing QI and research, this article presents four key considerations for individuals interested in engaging in a QI initiative: (1) focus on patients and value teams, (2) emphasize systems and processes of care, (3) appreciate the power of variability, and (4) require/collect simple data, such as frequencies and counts, to evaluate the effects of change.

"Quality Improvement in Athletic Health Care" *Lopes Sauers et al, 2017.* Athletic trainers can look to the Model for Improvement as a “how to” guide to carry out a quality improvement initiative. The model consists of three fundamental questions that facilitate a QI effort (What are we trying to accomplish? How will we know that a change is an improvement? What change can we make that will result in improvement?) followed by the **Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle**.



Examples of QI in Athletic Training:

"Athletic Trainers' Effect on Population Health: Improving Access to and Quality of Care" *Shanley et al, 2019.* This paper summarizes a QI initiative carried out across the Greenville County (SC) school district aimed at improving the health of their student-athletes. To focus on injury prevention/reduction, their steps involved (1) understanding injury numbers and magnitude across the schools in the district, (2) identifying risk factors and injury mechanisms, (3) determining prevention, treatment, and referral interventions, (4) evaluating the outcomes of the intervention, and (5) reporting the results to relevant stakeholders. As a result of the QI process, injury rates decreased and health care costs were cut by more than 50%.

"Return to Drive Counseling After Sports-Related Concussion: A Quality Improvement Project" *Stuart et al, 2016.* Clinicians employed in a sports medicine specialty clinic administered a survey to patients and found only 10% of patients (aged 16 and older) were provided with recommendations on driving following a concussion. Identifying this as a quality gap, they assembled a QI team and initiated an improvement effort to increase driving recommendations to more than 90% of patients. This article specifically highlights the use of a run chart as a visual to view the system over time and to evaluate whether the changes the QI team were making were leading to improvement.

"Quality Improvement in Athletic Training Education on Female Athlete Triad" *Paloncy-Patel et al, 2020.* Despite increased awareness about the female athlete triad, many female athletes are cleared for participation without receiving adequate screening or assessment for this syndrome. A QI effort was initiated at a Division I institution to improve 17 athletic trainers' knowledge of the triad, as well as their confidence to recognize/refer high-risk athletes. Athletic trainers were provided an educational in-service and were introduced to triad-specific screening questions that could be included in the pre-participation physical exam process. As a result, athletic trainers' knowledge and perceived confidence improved significantly, and practice standards increased significantly.

FREE COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

Quality improvement projects presented in the 2023 NATA Foundation Free Communications program:

"Ensuring the Use of Best-Practices for Hand Hygiene in an Athletic Training Healthcare System: A Quality Improvement Project" (*Duncan et al, 2023*) S-79

Implementation of a Social Determinants of Health Screening Tool into Rural Family Medical Clinics" (*Freiburger et al, 2023*) S-288

RESOURCES

JATCast: [The Science of Quality Improvement](#)

Dr. Mike Evan's Sketch Animation Video: [Quality Improvement in Healthcare](#)

Institute for Healthcare Improvement:

- [Quality Improvement Essentials Toolkit*](#)
- [Aim Statement Worksheet*](#)
- [Tools to Accelerate Improvement*](#)

*Links can be viewed, but a free account must be created to download specific tools

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2. Institute of Medicine (IOM). *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century.* Washington, D.C: National Academy Press; 2001.
3. Madden M, Ross DM. The theory of planned behavior as a framework to identify attitudes and perceptions of athletic trainers towards quality improvement. *Journal of Sports Medicine and Allied Health Science.* 2023;8(4):1-10.

