HOLIDAY PATIENT DEATH

Cause Map

New Years' Nursing Shortage Causes Delay in Treatment

A series of errors in treating a patient who entered the hospital during a staffing shortage on New Years leads to her death from a urinary tract infection.

"There was no care at all as far as I'm concerned."
- Patient's son

Cause Mapping is a Root Cause Analysis method that captures basic cause-and-effect relationships supported with evidence.

CAUSE MAPPING
Problem Solving • Incident Investigation • Root Cause Analysis

Step 1	Problem	What's the Problem?
Step 2	Analysis	Why did it happen?
Step 3	Solutions	What will be done?

1 Problem

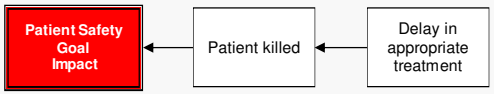
What	Problem(s)	Insufficient care, patient death
When	Date	December 31, 2010 - Patient admitted January 3, 2011 - Patient killed
	Different, unusual, unique	Nursing shortages due to holiday
Where	State, city	Leeds, UK
	Facility, site	St. James's Hospital
	Task being performed	Treatment for urinary tract infection

Impact to the Goals

Patient Safety	Patient killed
Employee Impact	Staff shortages
Compliance	Mistakes in chart & notes
Organization	Settlement from National Health Service (NHS)
Patient Services	Delay in appropriate treatment

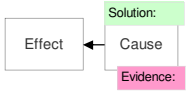
2 Analysis

Basic Level Cause Map - Start with simple Why questions.



Basic Cause-and-Effect

On December 31, 2010, a patient entered St. James's Hospital in Leeds for a urinary tract infection. Unfortunately for the patient, the hospital was experiencing nursing shortages due to the holiday and the patient died 3 days later. The death of the patient is an impact to the patient safety goal.

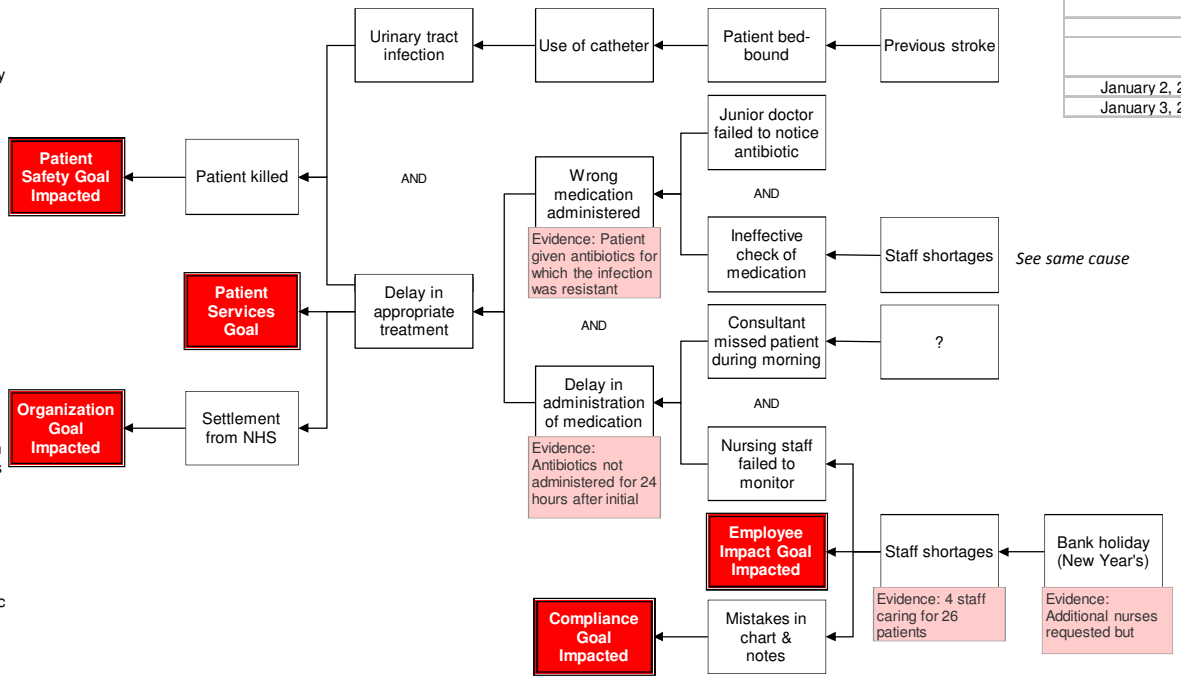


More Detailed Cause Map - Add detail as information becomes available.

More Detailed Cause-and-Effect

Besides the impact to the patient safety goal, there was an employee impact due to the staffing shortage. The patient's son noted mistakes in the patient notes and charts (an impact to the compliance goal) and received a settlement from the National Health Service (NHS). Last but certainly not least, the patient services goal was impacted due to the delay in appropriate treatment that the patient experienced.

The patient's death was due to the combination of a urinary tract infection and the delay in appropriate treatment. The urinary tract infection was caused by a catheter in place as the patient was bed-bound due to a previous stroke. The delay in treatment was two-fold: first, the patient was not given another dose of antibiotics for 24 hours after the initial dose administered in emergency room. Second, the medication that was eventually given was not effective as the infection was resistant to that particular antibiotic. The junior doctor who prescribed the medication failed to notice the antibiotic resistance and there was no over check of the prescription, likely due to the staffing shortage.



Timeline

Date	Time	Description
		Previous stroke leaves patient bed-bound
		Patient contracts urinary tract infection
December 31, 2010		Night shift begins with two qualified nurses unavailable for duty
		Nurses requested from nurse bank (unfilled)
	~10:00 p.m.	Patient admitted to hospital
		Patient treated with antibiotics in casualty
		Patient left on trolley
January 1, 2011	~2:00 a.m.	Patient received a bed
		Consultant on morning rounds fails to see patient
		No checks on vital signs for 15 hours
	~10:00 p.m.	Patient receives antibiotics to which the infection is resistant
January 2, 2011		Patient admitted to high-dependency unit
January 3, 2011		Patient dies

The patient was not monitored for 15 hours during the first 24 hours she was in the hospital. Neither the nurses (again, likely due to the shortage) nor the consultant who performed morning rounds monitored her during this time. This likely also led to mistakes in the patient's notes and chart (which her son says number 140) and contributed to the patient's death. The NHS and hospital involved have developed an action plan to ensure that lessons are learned from this incident.

For a free copy of our Root Cause Analysis Template in Microsoft Excel, used to create this page, visit our web site.

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