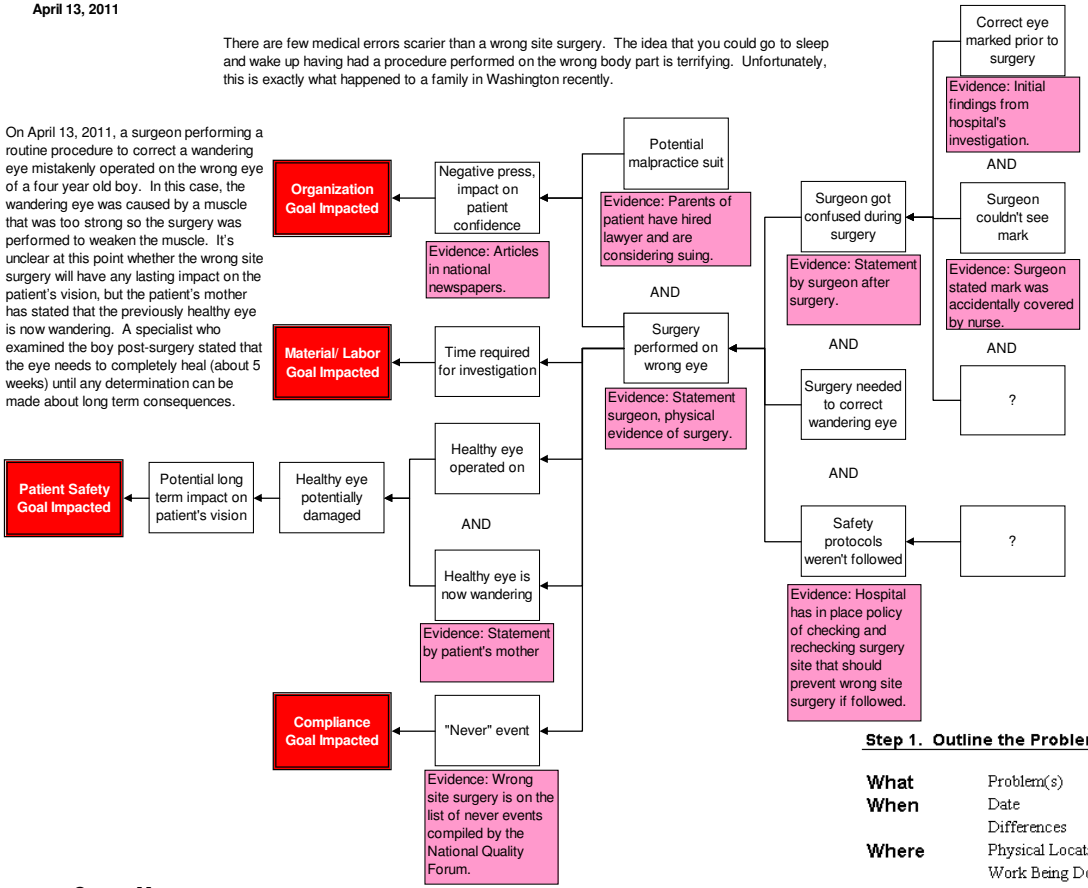
Surgery Performed on Wrong Eye

Vancouver, WA

April 13, 2011

There are few medical errors scarier than a wrong site surgery. The idea that you could go to sleep and wake up having had a procedure performed on the wrong body part is terrifying. Unfortunately, this is exactly what happened to a family in Washington recently.

On April 13, 2011, a surgeon performing a routine procedure to correct a wandering eye mistakenly operated on the wrong eye of a four year old boy. In this case, the wandering eye was caused by a muscle that was too strong so the surgery was performed to weaken the muscle. It's unclear at this point whether the wrong site surgery will have any lasting impact on the patient's vision, but the patient's mother has stated that the previously healthy eye is now wandering. A specialist who examined the boy post-surgery stated that the eye needs to completely heal (about 5 weeks) until any determination can be made about long term consequences.



How did this happen? How does a surgeon perform a procedure on the wrong part of the body? And most importantly, how do we prevent these types of errors in the future?

The investigation of this incident is still ongoing, but a Cause Map of the incident can be started and then expanded as more information becomes available. A Cause Map is a visual root cause analysis that lays out the causes of an incident in an intuitive format. Once the Cause Map is complete, it can be used to develop solutions to help prevent future problems.

It isn't clear yet how the mistake was made. Findings from the investigation so far have determined that the correct eye was marked before surgery, but statements by the surgeon indicate that the mark may have been accidentally covered by a nurse. The hospital has protocols in place that require checking and double checking the surgery site, but it's not clear why they weren't followed. Once the investigation is complete, the hospital will determine what solutions need to be implemented to ensure that this doesn't happen again.

Step 1. Outline the Problem

What	Problem(s)	Surgery performed on wrong eye
When	Date	April 13, 2011
	Differences	??
Where	Physical Location	Medical Center, Portland, OR
	Work Being Done	Surgery to correct wandering eye

Impact to the Goals

Patient Safety	Potential long term impact on patient's vision
Compliance	"Never" event
Organization Impact	Negative press, impact on patient confidence
Material, Labor Cost	Time required for investigation

??

Frequency ??

Annual Total ??

Cause Map

High Level

ThinkReliability

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Why?

Effect ← Cause

NOTE: Read the Cause Map from left to right with the phrase "Was Caused By" in place of