Impact of Continuous Improvement and Quality Improvement Methodologies on Behaviors and Attitudes of Healthcare Personnel Providing Care to LGBT+ Patients within a Health Plan

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of process and quality improvement (PI/QI) methodologies and checklists on the attitudes and behaviors of healthcare personnel who provide care to LGBT+ patients within a health plan. While standardization protocols and checklists are commonly used in healthcare, their effectiveness in improving patient quality and safety still needs to be determined. Organizational change is also essential in healthcare, as the field is constantly growing and transforming. It is essential to understand both internal and external forces that contribute to organizational change and ensure that changes are sustainable within all levels and structures of the firm. Addressing these factors is critical for successful change management in healthcare organizations.

BACKGROUND

Healthcare often neglects the needs of LGBT+ individuals, requiring a deeper understanding of their care. Research should expand beyond clinical programs and hospitals to include health plans, providing a broader perspective. Developing a foundation in this area can inform quality improvement efforts for vulnerable populations, helping health plans address common barriers and deliver equitable care. Change management is a systematic approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations to a desired future state. It consists of four phases: prepare for change, assess change readiness, manage the change, and sustain the change. Achieving health equity through organizational change is challenging. It requires addressing power dynamics, racism, and organizational processes. Effective leadership, change management strategies, and a focus on value and high-quality care for all are essential. Organizational behavior management (OBM), combined with change management, can lead to transformational change in healthcare organizations, as evidenced by initiatives such as increasing handwashing frequency through feedback.

METHODS

The qualitative study involved conducting individual key informant interviews within a two-week timeframe. Eligible participants had to meet specific criteria and were selected through a Microsoft Form. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and lasted 20 to 30 minutes. Transcriptions of the interviews were obtained and coded using inductive coding analysis in Microsoft Excel. The coded data were then analyzed to identify themes and participants' views. Quantitative analyses were also performed using the coded data.

Research Questions
- How does process improvement influence perceptions of health plan providers (or operations) focused on delivering LGBT+ care?
- What are the attitudes of LGBT+ program providers within health plans towards process improvement and checklists?

RESULTS

Themes with Positive Attitudes (Top 3)
1. PI requires individuals who have experience in LGBTQ Care to be involved from the beginning to ensure successful outcomes
2. PI can be beneficial for organizations on the individual level, organizational goal alignment, and member outcomes
3. Continuous education is necessary for PI to be successful, and there are levels to achievement (Maslow Hierarchy of Needs)

Themes with Negative Attitudes (Top 3)
1. PI has been observed to disrupt the environments it enters and has not been equitable,
2. PI can be implemented, but will not be successful if organizational/individual resistance exists,
3. PI can be beneficial for organizations on the individual level, organizational goal alignment, and member outcomes.

HEALTH EQUITY APPLICATION

Priority 2: Improving Health Equity
This research contributes to this priority by exploring the impact of continuous improvement and quality improvement methodologies on the attitudes and behaviors of healthcare personnel who provide care to LGBT+ patients within a health plan. The data obtained from this study highlights various themes related to positive, negative, and neutral attitudes. Understanding these attitudes can inform equitable care while ensuring that access and flow to care are not disrupted. This work can help develop future PI methodologies and lead to additional studies promoting high-quality patient care.

Priority 3: Enhancing Quality and Safety of Patient Care
This research contributes to this priority by exploring the impact of continuous improvement and quality improvement methodologies and checklists on the attitudes and behaviors of healthcare personnel who provide care to LGBT+ patients within a health plan. These methodologies have been integrated to improve patient quality and safety in healthcare. By understanding the impact of these methodologies on the behaviors and attitudes of healthcare personnel, this research can inform the development of future PI methodologies that promote high-quality care for all patients, including LGBT+ patients.

KEY LEARNINGS

- Importance in having a diverse sample size that reflects the population in question, luckily all interviewees were a part of the LGBTQ+ community,
- There were several high-level themes, which could have been further narrowed down, but conducting a proper relationship analysis would be ideal for the future,
- PI has been marketed to be a methodology with not much fault; however, there is much work to do to create inclusive and equitable processes, and
- Understanding intergenerational conflict and the history of healthcare is crucial as it has impacted many attitudes of the individuals committed to this work.

CONCLUSIONS

Organizational change is essential for growth, but it can be a lengthy and challenging process. Healthcare organizations are no exception, and they require an understanding of internal and external forces that contribute to change to ensure that it is fit and sustainable. Continuous and quality improvement methodologies and checklists are heavily utilized in healthcare to improve care, patient quality, and safety. Our study aimed to explore the impact of these methodologies and checklists on the attitudes and behaviors of healthcare personnel who provide care to LGBT+ patients within a health plan. The data obtained from this study highlights various themes related to positive, negative, and neutral attitudes, but further research is required to understand attitudes across various demographics. Understanding behavioral patterns from a health plan perspective can inform equitable care while ensuring that access and flow to care are not disrupted. This work can lead to additional studies that promote high-quality care for all patients and can help develop future PI methodologies.

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