

Quality Improvement Glossary

To learn more about these terms, visit the glossaries at these web sites:

HyperStat <http://davidmlane.com/hyperstat/index.html>

SurfStat Australia <http://www.anu.edu.au/nceph/surfstat/surfstat-home/surfstat.html>

Stat Soft, Inc. The Electronic Textbook <http://www.statsoft.com/textbook/stathome.html>

American Society for Quality <http://www.asq.org/abtquality/glossary.html>

Joint Commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

http://www.jcaho.org/sentinel/sentevnt_frm.html

Benchmarking. The process of comparing performance levels in an agency/organization with external standards established as high levels of performance. Involves learning about key methods/processes that enable other agencies to consistently achieve good outcomes.

Cause-and-effect diagram. Also known as a Fishbone diagram. A method used to systematically isolate factors that may cause a problem or prevent a process from operating at maximum efficiency. The shape of the diagram resembles a fish skeleton. The head and backbone represent the problem or effect. Main bones that project from the backbone represent categories of causes.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). Ongoing betterment of products, services or processes through incremental and breakthrough enhancements.

Control Chart. A graph used to monitor the extent to which a process or phenomenon is stable over a given period of time and to determine when a process or phenomenon is out of statistical control. Control charts are often grouped into two broad categories—charts for variables and charts for attributes. Control charts for variables are used to plot [continuous](#) data. Control charts for attributes are used to plot [discrete](#) data (**need to link continuous and discrete to terms in research glossary**).

Fishbone diagram. Also known as a cause-and-effect diagram.

Flowchart. A graphic technique used to depict the sequence of steps in a service or process. The chart is often used to identify redundancy, inefficiency or problem areas.

Quality Assurance. Having confidence that a service or process fulfills requirements for quality. Making certain that pre-determined criteria or standards for quality have been met.

Quality Control. Actions or methods that are used to ensure the quality of a product or service.

Quality Improvement. The betterment or enhancement of a product or service.

Outlier. A data value that does not follow the characteristic distribution of a given set of data. A data value that falls far above or far below the middle of a distribution.

Pareto analysis. A method used to guide or determine where the greatest opportunity for improvement exists. More specifically, a [Pareto chart](#) is used to sort vital problems from others or to identify basic causes of a problem. The method is often used as a starting point for problem solving. It is also used to monitor progress toward improvement. The method is based on the Pareto principle which states that most of the effects (80%) come from relatively few causes (20%). (need to link Pareto chart to term in QI glossary)

Qualitative analysis. Detailed information about an event, process, or experience is collected and reviewed with an intent to identify themes, trends or hypotheses.

Root cause analysis. A strategy used to identify the most basic or causal factor(s) that contribute to variations in performance. Most often used to identify causal factors that underlie a sentinel event or major unusual incident.

Statistical Process Control (SPC). A statistical approach used to evaluate and/or control a process. More specifically, statistical techniques are used to determine if variability in a process is stable over time. If the process is not stable (or in statistical control), then causes are identified and removed to establish stability. Also see Statistic Quality Control, Control Chart.

Statistical Quality Control (SQC). A statistical approach used to evaluate and/or control quality. Often used interchangeably with Statistic Process Control. SQC includes sampling determinations as well as statistical process control. Also see Statistical Process Control, Control Chart.

References:

American Society for Quality. (2000). Glossary [On-line]. Available <http://www.asq.org>

HyperStat Online. (2000). Statistical control chart tutorial [On-line]. Available <http://davidmlane.com/hyperstat/index.html>

HyperStat Online. (2000). Statistics Glossary [On-line]. Available <http://davidmlane.com/hyperstat/index.html>

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SurfStat Australia. (2000). Statistics glossary [On-line]. Available <http://www.anu.edu.au/nceph/surfstat/surfstat-home/surfstat.html> (July, 2000).