

## Measurement for Improvement<sup>1</sup> Key Points

### *Why measure?*

Measurement plays an important role in answering the question "*How do we know that a change is an improvement?*" The purpose of measurement is to help you determine how effective your quality improvement efforts are so you can adjust them to your needs and capabilities.

- Key outcome and process measures are required to assess progress toward your team's aim
- Balancing measures are needed to assess whether the system as a whole is being improved
- Data from the system can be used to focus improvement and refine changes
- Specific measures can be used for learning about the changes made during PDSA test cycles

### *How is measurement for improvement different from research?*

It's very different! Measurement for improvement is based on keeping track of a few simple measures to see if the rapid cycle changes in care are working. Its purpose is to help your team and other teams learn from changes. In a collaborative, teams learn from each other, so results and progress are usually transparent and shared among participants. Measurement is for learning, not judging, as improvement is an on-going process -- it's not where you are now, but where you're going. See the chart below for a quick comparison of measurement for improvement and research:

#### **Spreading Innovation**

*Aim:* Improvement

*Methods:*

Test observable

Stable bias

Just enough data

Adaptation of changes

Sequential tests

#### **Publishing Research**

*Aim:* New knowledge

*Methods:*

Test blinded

Eliminate bias

Just in case

Fixed hypothesis

One large test

<sup>1</sup>Langley, Nolan, Norman, and Lloyd P. Provost. *The Improvement Guide: A Practical Approach to Enhancing Organizational Performance*. New York: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1996.

## Measurement for Improvement Key Points

### Guidelines for measurement for improvement

- Keep it simple -- focus on a few measures
- The key measures should clarify the aim and make it tangible
- Seek usefulness, not perfection
- Use a balanced set of measures, including outcome and process measures. The question, "How will we know that a change is an improvement?" usually requires more than one measure. A balanced set of four to seven measures helps assure that you are assessing the entire system.

We use three types of measures:

*Outcome Measures:* Voice of the customer or organization; How is the system performing? What is the result?

*Process Measures:* Voice of the workings of the system; things you can control in your agency; Are the parts / steps in the system performing as planned?

*Balancing Measures:* Looking at a system from different directions/dimensions. What happened to the system as we improved the outcome and process measures?

- Use your databases for measurement
- Integrate measurement activities into your daily routine
- Gather some qualitative data
- Plot data on measures over time

### Measurement Plan

For each additional measure consider the following:

- How is it operationally defined?
- What data will be collected?
- On which population?
- How will the data be collected?
- Who will collect the data?
- When?