

SPECIAL ARTICLE

Implementing an Emergency Department Improvement Methodology course: Insights and experiences from Cincinnati to Latin America

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Quality improvement requires an approach that enables individuals to understand the functioning of organizational systems and implement changes to better and more consistently address patient needs and management. Improvement methods are integrated into an 'Improvement Model' based on the philosophy of Deming^a.

In 2022, the Latin American Society of Pediatric Emergency Medicine (SLEPE) partnered with Cincinnati Children's Hospital to deliver a course on improvement methodology. The objective of the course was to provide a practical introduction to the theory of improvement methodology, aiming to address existing barriers in healthcare systems and enhance the quality of care provided to patients in pediatric emergency departments across Latin America.

The SLEPE confirmed the participation of five teams from institutions from different Latin American countries: Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. One of the requirements was that each team included a leader and consisted of pediatric residents, nurses, and assistant pediatricians. Guided by Knowles' principles of andragogy, a curriculum was developed that integrated theoretical concepts and practical exercises, providing participants with the knowledge and tools needed to successfully

implement an improvement project within their respective institutions.

The course content draws partially on concepts from the 'Institute for Healthcare Improvement' (IHI) and the improvement methodology outlined in the book by Langley, while also addressing knowledge gaps identified through a participant survey. The primary distinction between traditional scientific research and improvement methodology lies in the latter's 'learning-by-doing' approach. This method involves progressively testing a series of solutions and changes, starting with small-scale interventions and gradually expanding them to determine which yield a significant positive impact on the system.

From the outset, all five teams demonstrated exceptional enthusiasm in addressing and solving the challenges in their respective workplaces. This dedication was crucial to effectively manage and lead their teams throughout the year in their roles as leaders. From a teaching perspective, the most notable aspect of this experience was the active participation of all involved, contributing ideas and suggestions to the projects. A collaborative environment was created, enabling mutual learning among residents, nurses, attendings, and us as instructors. We all shared a common goal: to enhance patient care in the Emergency Department.

Graduation day marked a significant milestone as the teams presented their final projects, demonstrating the successful achievement of their objectives and highlighting the positive impact on their respective systems. This accomplishment represented a meaningful step towards bridging the gap between education and healthcare.

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^aWilliam Edwards Deming (1900 – 1993), an American physicist and statistician, was the promoter of the concept of quality. His philosophy focuses on identifying ways to improve the quality of products and services.

In this issue of the journal, the first of the projects is presented, followed by the others, all of which have had a significant impact on the institutions of the members.

Our final message to the participants is this: Continue breaking down barriers. Now is the time to persist in the

search for that 'ideal system' in which all patients, regardless of race, education, or socioeconomic status, receive quality medical care.