

Frequently asked questions about Root Cause Analysis

for patients/consumers, families, carers and/or support persons

What is a Root Cause Analysis (RCA)?

A RCA is one way of investigating an incident to find out:

- > what happened during care which caused harm to a patient/consumer
- > why it happened
- > how it can be prevented from happening again.

A RCA is used to help the health system learn from an incident so that the quality of the care provided to patients/consumers can be improved.

A team of health care staff, which is usually made up of three people is convened. The RCA team, with the needed expert skills and knowledge, consider any issues within the health system that contributed to the incident. They provide suggestions about what can be done to prevent a similar thing from happening again.

What is an incident?

Incident (harm) is an incident that led to patient/consumer harm. Such incidents can either be part of the health care process, or occur in the health care setting (ie while the patient/consumer is admitted to, or in the care of a health service organisation).

Incident (no harm) is an error or system failure that reaches the patient/consumer but does not result in patient harm.

Near miss (no harm) is an incident that did not cause harm but had the potential to do so.

Can I be involved in a RCA?

Everyone involved in an incident may have a different view of what happened.

While you can't be a member of the RCA team you can be involved in the RCA by agreeing to speak with the team.

You can tell them what you think happened and give them any suggestions you may have about how to prevent it from happening again.

The more information a RCA team gathers, the better understanding they will have of how and why the incident happened. It is important that they have a good understanding so that the suggestions they make can help to fix the system.

How long will a RCA take?

This will depend on what the incident was and how complex the investigation is.

The RCA team attempts to complete the process as quickly as possible. However, it may often take three (3) months before the final report is available.

If it is going to take longer than three months the RCA team must apply to the Department for Health and Ageing for an extension.

Will I be told what the RCA team found?

Due to current legislation you can't be told about all the information discovered during the investigation. However, you will be told what suggestions the RCA team has made to prevent a similar incident happening again.

Root cause analysis is a quality improvement activity and all Australian states, territories, and the commonwealth have legislation in place that protects the confidentiality of some information generated during quality improvement activity.

In South Australia that legislation is the *Health Care Act 2008 (SA)*, the relevant part being Part 8 – Analysis of adverse incidents.

How do I find out more about the RCA process?

Information about the RCA process including the SA Health Root Cause Analysis Policy Directive is available on the Governance for Safety and Quality page of the SA Health website at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/safetyandquality.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to talk to a health care staff member.

For more information

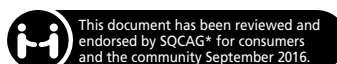
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