



QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN HEALTHCARE EXPLAINED

Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality Improvement (QI) - what's the difference?

QA is about maintaining quality while QI is about enhancing it.

Why is QI such a big deal?

- QI allows individuals to create change, from improving individual patient care and experience to provider work flow and experience, to transforming entire health systems.
- QI can be really small and simple like adjusting appointment scheduling or larger, formal initiatives like implementing new electronic health record systems. It's all about trying out an idea to see if it leads to a positive change.
- Staff often have a positive experience with QI as it creates a culture where staff can voice their opinions on changing their work environment and experiment with ideas to make improvements.

British Columbia has a comprehensive approach to quality in its health care system

• BC Health Quality Matrix:

- Framework adopted by BC's health authorities, Ministry of Health and health organizations.
- Provides a shared definition of quality for all health and wellness services.
- Encompasses seven Dimensions of Quality (such as Respect, Safety, and Effectiveness) and five interconnected Areas of Care.
- <https://healthqualitybc.ca/bc-health-quality-matrix/>

• Health Regulators:

- BC's 23 regulatory colleges oversee 26 health professions that establish quality assurance programs based on the legislation and their own bylaws.
- <https://bchealthregulators.ca/>

• BC Hospitals:

Quality measurement in hospitals involves several approaches:

- **Quality Standards:** Concise, evidence-based statements that describe key aspects of high-quality care for specific conditions or topics.
 - **Quality Assurance (QA)** measures compliance against the standards and is a defensive approach with a provider-centric focus.
- **Quality Indicators:** Statistics associated with quality standards that track whether care meets those standards or improves it.
 - **Quality Improvement (QI)** is the continuous process that enhances processes and outcomes, emphasizing system-level improvement.
- **Local Quality Management or Medical Quality Management (MQM) Committees** within hospitals are quality assurance structures that serve several crucial functions such as regulatory compliance, prioritizing improvement initiatives, investigating events to understand underlying causes, and monitoring results.
 - Intent of the committee is to be multi-disciplinary/multi-sectorial and may include physicians, hospital administration, nursing, pharmacy and allied health staff, as well as quality and safety experts.
- **Local Quality Improvement departments** within hospitals are funded by the health authority to work with local, regional, and provincial teams to provide education and support for QI projects.

• Regional Quality Improvement Initiatives open to physician involvement:

- Physician Quality Improvement (PQI) <https://www.doctorsofbc.ca/managing-your-practice/quality-improvement/physician-quality-improvement-initiative>
- Practice Support Program (PSP) <https://www.doctorsofbc.ca/managing-your-practice/quality-improvement/practice-support-program-psp>
- Shared Care (SC) <https://sharedcarebc.ca/>