Storytelling as a Management Tool:
Institutionalizing the Data Quality Function
at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
(Practice-Oriented Paper)

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Executive Summary

Especially in the hospital setting, motivating support for the implementation of information quality (IQ) standards and policies can be a daunting task. Priorities for both leadership and employees focus first on direct patient care, second on meeting budgets, third on patient care improvement, and only at a much more subterranean level on managing IQ. This is true despite the fact that higher-level priorities in many ways depend upon the timely availability of accurate information for administrative and clinical decision-making. While there are a number of current legislative and regulatory initiatives that would impose IQ standards upon healthcare organizations, at the same time, the healthcare industry is experiencing decreasing revenue per unit of output as purchasers and payers try to reduce their costs.

In this type of environment, how can leaders be motivated to prioritize IQ work, and how can employees be motivated to allocate the time and energy required to carry out that work? One way, certainly, is to quantify the impact of poor quality information, for example in terms of lost revenue or lost customers. However, it is generally agreed that this is conceptually difficult, and furthermore, dry lists of numbers do not always succeed in sufficiently mobilizing the commitment needed to squeeze yet another high priority task into a day that is already full to overflowing with high priority tasks. This Practice-Oriented Paper explores storytelling as a management tool that can serve to capture the interest and support needed to successfully establish and implement IQ standards and policies.

Storytelling as a Management Tool

Institutionalizing the Data Quality Function
at Cedars Sinai Medical Center

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Large Urban Teaching Hospital

- 875 Beds
- Almost 10,000 personnel
  - 8,000 Employees
  - 1,750 Physicians
- $2 Billion in gross revenue
- "Illuminated manuscript" as gold standard for information transmission

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Financial and Administrative Systems at CSHS

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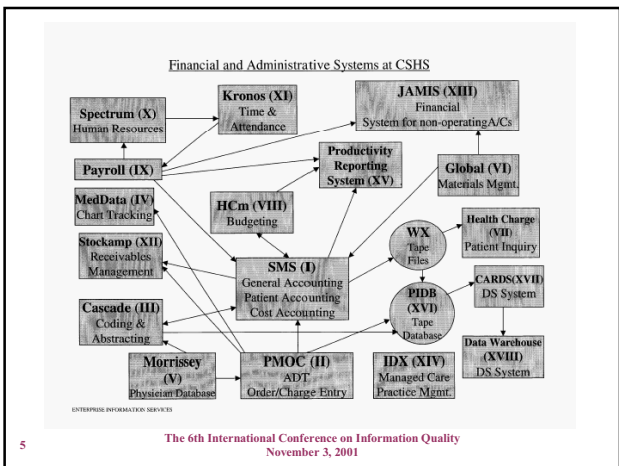
CEDARS-SINAI MEDICAL CENTER

- Academic Medical Center/Health System
- Largest Non-Profit Hospital in the Western US
- Basic Annual Statistics
  - 50,000 inpatients
  - 90,000 outpatients
  - 60,000 ER visits
  - 7,000 deliveries

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CSHS Application Interfaces

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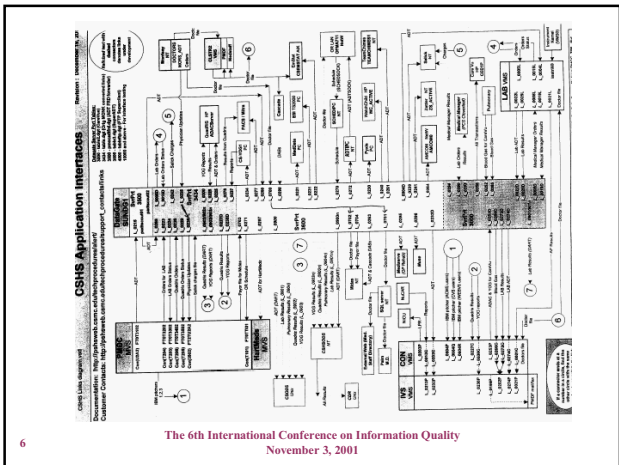
## Data Quality Initiative Emerges from Resource & Outcomes Management Dept.

- Internal Consulting Department
- Produces Clinically Oriented Information Products to Support Systematic Patient Care Improvement
- Assures Availability and Reliability of Required Data and Validity of Methods
- Manages Information Flow Through Institution-Wide Quality Management and Medical Staff Database/Reporting Applications

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It may look like a lot is going on,

but where we're really going is still not that clear...
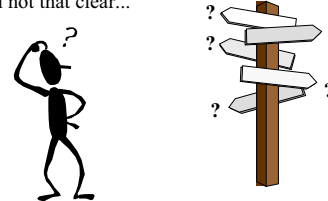
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Resource & Outcomes Management Dept.'s Vision, Mission, & Objectives

- Vision
  - To be the trusted source for reliable information
- Mission
  - To deliver information products that meet our customers' desired standards of integrity, completeness, accuracy, timeliness, and usability
- Objectives
  - Delivery of specific information products
  - Information management for specific applications

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Since, for example…

- DPG Charter was renewed this year by senior leadership, but its meeting frequency dropped from once per month to once every two months, and it has been cancelled once, so it has only met 3 times this year.
- DQMWG Charter was renewed this year by DPG, but key departments, such as IS and Finance, rarely participate.

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History of DQ function at CSMC

- 1997
  - DPG Convened
- 1998
  - TDQM Summer Course
  - DQMWG Spun Off of DPG
  - IQ Survey, round 1
- 1999
  - DQ Concept Kick-Off
  - IQ Survey, round 2
  - DQ Mgmnt Objectives first in FY 99-00 Annual Plan
- 2000
  - Big DQ Improvement Project
  - DQ Mgmnt Objectives again in FY 00-01 Annual Plan
  - ROM Dept reorganization to capitalize on DQ framework
- 2001
  - DPG & DQMWG Charters reviewed and renewed
  - DQ Mgmnt Objectives re-emphasized in FY01-02 Annual Plan
  - IQ Survey, round 3

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The Sad Realities of Life

- It's not enough to make a logical argument and advocate for it vigorously.
- Senior leadership has many pressing issues to address and does not yet recognize the relative importance of this function.
- Operational departments aren't yet budgeted to accommodate this function so staffing levels don't reflect required effort.

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Leading to One Point of View...

Institutional Midwife

- Trying to help an organization give birth to a new function
- It's a painful process and there are risks
- Can we play a role that will soothe the mother's pain and ensure the baby's survival?

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Institutionalizing through Change

- Efforts to advocate vigorously for a logical argument are not having the desired impact.
- What changes do I need to undertake in my approach that might increase the impact?

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And Another Point of View

Agent of Change

- All improvements are changes, but not all changes are improvements.
- How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?
- Can we help the organization want to change?

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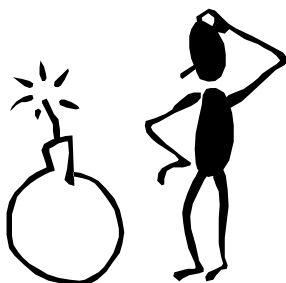The 6th International Conference on Information Quality
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Improvement in Institutionalization

- Increase the degree to which the data quality function is embraced by leadership and line staff alike.
- Help leadership recognize the relative priority of the data quality function and allocate resources so staffing levels will reflect required effort.

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What to do...? What to do…?

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Preview of Key Points

- It's hard to catch their attention, and when you do, they focus on little stuff
- Framing and communications strategies dominate the game plan at this stage of institutionalization.
- How to address it? Here's my example.

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So how *do* you catch their attention?

Numbers?

Yes, you've gotta have numbers. But it's hard to measure the overall impact of poor data quality, so when you do measure, you end up focusing on all the little fires.
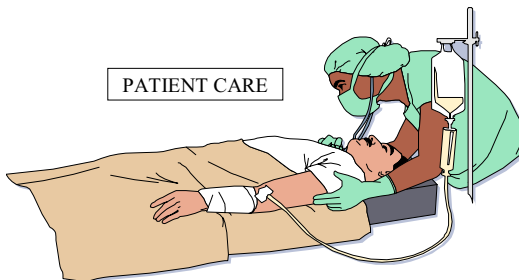
– How much money will we lose because the diagnosis codes in the contract aren't the same as the patients' actual codes?

– How many days will we incur a fine because our required data submission to the state doesn't meet their specs?

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#1 PRIORITY

PATIENT CARE

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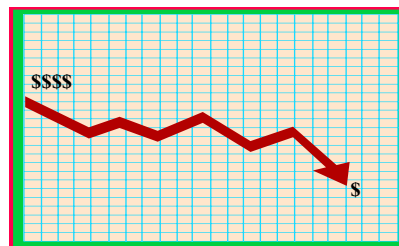November 3, 2001

But numbers like that aren't enough...

■ They ask for numbers so you bring them numbers, and then they focus on putting out the all little fires instead of on why there are so many little fires that need to be put out to begin with.

■ Perhaps they think that if we put out the little fires quickly enough we can keep the whole thing from going up in flames...

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#2 PRIORITY

CONTROLLING COSTS

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And as they put the little fires out
...one by one...

■ You'd think attention would automatically move in the direction of investing in the data quality function

■ But instead, they quickly turn their attention back to the REAL priorities...

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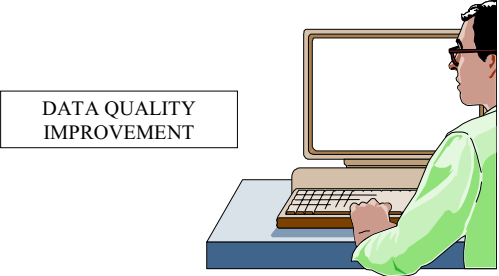## #3 PRIORITY

PATIENT CARE IMPROVEMENT TEAMS

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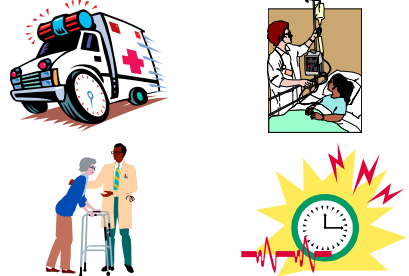The 6th International Conference on Information Quality
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#4 priority?

DATA QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT

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…without forgetting
THE **_REAL_** PRIORITIES!!!

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How do you convince them…?

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…and always keeping in mind that...

"All data are wrong.
Some data are useful."

-- W. Edwards Demming

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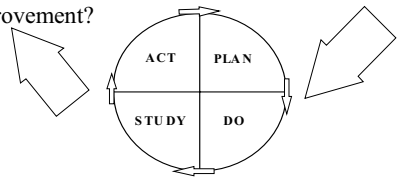…that it's worth the cost?

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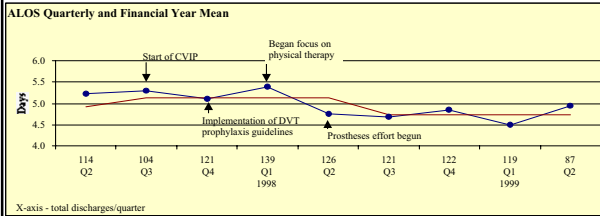November 3, 2001

Measurement for Improvement

- What are we trying to accomplish? (Aims)
- How do we know that change is an improvement?
- What changes can we make that will result in an improvement?

ACT   PLAN
STUDY   DO

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Documenting Improvement Over Time
Total Hip Replacement LOS

ALOS Quarterly and Financial Year Mean

X-axis - total discharges/quarter

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Relative Priority

- How to influence relative priority when there are many competing high priority projects
- Taking what's important to you and making it important to them

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Storytelling...

- Offers context, relevance, emotion, and a lasting mental image
- May be most powerful way of delivering a compelling and memorable message
- Strategic Issues
  – Framing
  – Communications

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Salience and Internalizability

- Choosing an image that already has innate meaning to most audiences
- Getting people to respond to the message through a self-motivated mechanism
- Can they tell the story too?

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Framing Strategy

- Relative Priority
  – Opening up the door
- Salience
  – Innate meaning - powerful response
- Internalizability
  – Translating ideas into action

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Communications Strategy

- Simplification and Repetition
  – Huh?
- Persuasion
  – OK, why should I do it?
- Role
  – My role as I see it and as they see it

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Simplification and Repetition

- It may take 25 repetitions per listener for a message to be effectively delivered due to:
  - Information Overload: We're bombarded with new information every day.
  - Rate of Absorption: New information is absorbed and processed slowly.
  - Searching for Consistency: Consistency of message is used by listeners to judge sincerity.

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So What Does This Say About How to Take Action?

- If improvement = change, then
- The change hypothesized to improve the degree to which the data quality function is embraced by leadership and line staff alike is to
- Develop a powerful, simple, easily remembered story and repeat it over and over again

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Persuasion

...persuasion becomes a negotiating and learning process through which a persuader leads colleagues to a problem's shared solution…

- Conger, JA. The Necessary Art of Persuasion.
Harvard Business Review, May-June 1998.

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Game Plan - The Test of Change

- Develop story or analogy
- Practice talking about it
- Have it ready to use - you never know when the opportunity might arise.
- Notice when it can be worked into a discussion.
- Use it often - Remember! 25xpp

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Role

- From MY Point of View
  - Institutional Midwife
  - Agent of Change
- From THEIR Point of View
  - Reliable Source of Technical Expertise
  - Trusted Advisor

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My Story

- Info Systems = Plumbing
- Data = Water
- Data Quality = Sewage Treatment & Water Purification
- Clean Data = Pure Water

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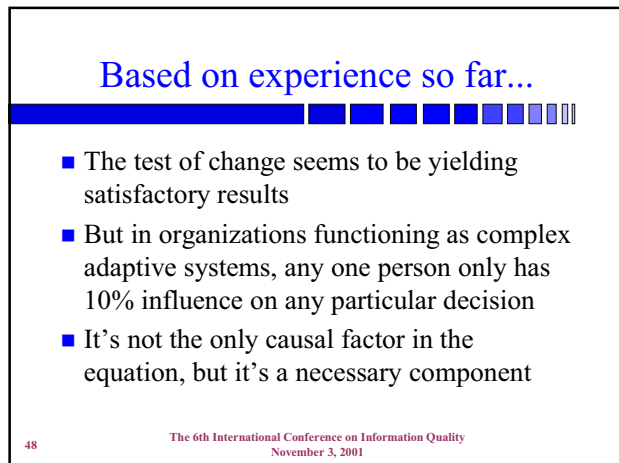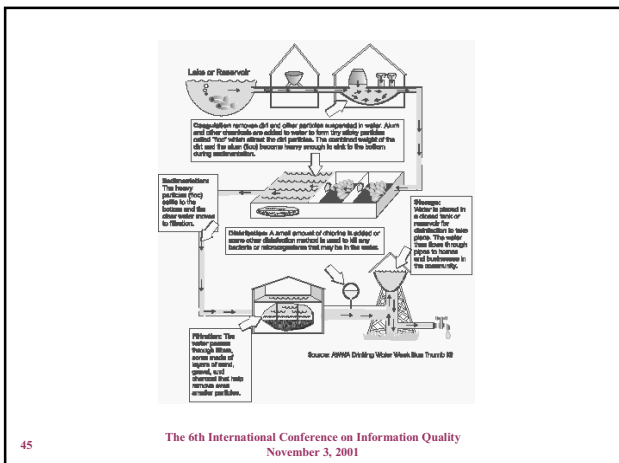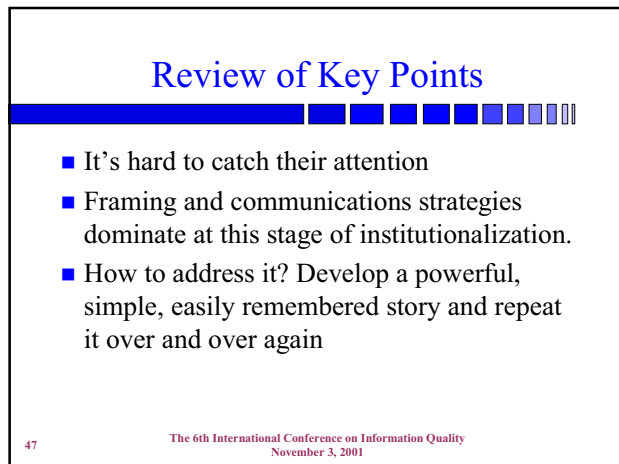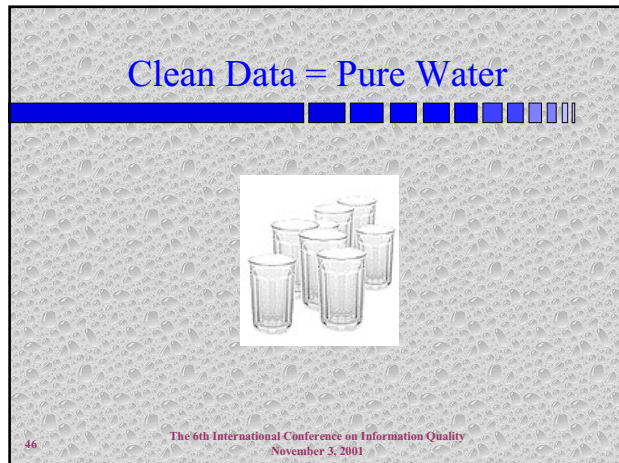## Clean Data = Pure Water

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Review of Key Points

- It's hard to catch their attention
- Framing and communications strategies dominate at this stage of institutionalization.
- How to address it? Develop a powerful, simple, easily remembered story and repeat it over and over again

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Based on experience so far...

- The test of change seems to be yielding satisfactory results
- But in organizations functioning as complex adaptive systems, any one person only has 10% influence on any particular decision
- It's not the only causal factor in the equation, but it's a necessary component

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Storytelling as a Management Tool

- Develop story or analogy
- Practice talking about it
- Use it often

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Institutionalization of the Data Quality Function may Benefit from Storytelling

- Increases the degree to which the data quality function is embraced by leadership and line staff alike.

- Helps leadership recognize the relative priority of the data quality function and allocate resources so staffing levels will reflect required effort.

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Clean Data = Pure Water

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