# Model for Improvement Summary

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The **Model for Improvement** provides a way to improve care just like the scientific method helps with learning new knowledge. It was developed by experts who studied organizations that successfully made changes. It is a simple way to approach any aspect of care from big system issues to individual care between a health care professional and a patient.

There are 6 steps to using the Model for Improvement:
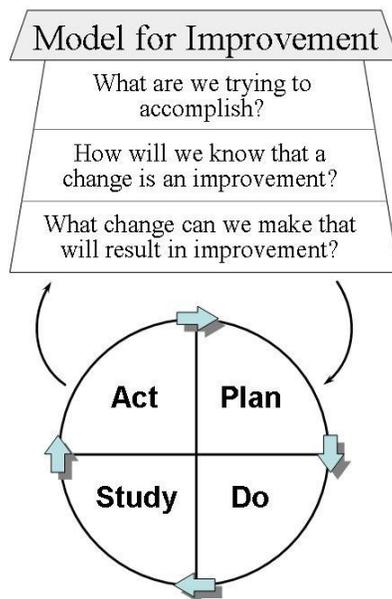
1) Set an aim: Answer the question, "What are we trying to accomplish?" The aim needs to be measurable and have a completion date. For example, an aim can be "Use a Disease Management Program to improve our diabetes outcomes."

2) Decide how to measure what you want accomplish. Answer the question, "How will we know that a change is an improvement?" If we don't measure what we've done, we don't know if what we did is better. These are the "vital signs" of your project. An example might be:
- % of patients with diabetes with BP <140/90
- % of patients with HbA1c <7
- % of patients with self-confidence >7

3) Select some new ideas to try. Answer the question: "What change can we make that will result in improvement?" The changes might come from your own ideas, the literature about the topic of interest or from other organizations that have high performance.

4) Test your ideas using PDSA cycles. **PDSA** stands for Plan-Do-Study-Act. It is rapid process for testing ideas that can result in improvement; but testing on a small scale. It is much like trying out an intervention with a patient. It is a way to increase how much we learn from our improvement, and ensure the change works properly before implementing it on a larger scale

Plan: Review your aim and measures and decide what you can try that might improve the situation. Make it a simple and fast test, like trying with one nurse and one patient today or tomorrow.
- Clearly state the question you are trying to answer (objective) with your PDSA.
- Predict what you think will happen.
- Determine who is going to do the test, when and where.

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- Determine how you are going to collect data to help you know whether or not your test was a success. This type of data is different from the measures in Step Two. Here the data is what you observe when you try testing the idea.)

Do: Try your new idea. Collect the data about the success of your test. Note any unusual things that were not expected.

Study: Look at the results of your test and review your data. Was it faster? Did it work better? Did the patient or health care professional like it? Does the information you collected match your prediction?

Act: Based on what you learned during the study step, what do you want to do next? Do you need to try it on more patients to see if it works with different kinds of people in different situations, or do you need to modify your idea? Or do you want to abandon the idea and look for another. The Act step leads to a new PDSA cycle.

PDSA cycles build on each other. Each test of a new idea or refinement of an idea leads to changes in care. The measures (in Step Two) will let us know if our ideas are working the way we think they will.

Repeated Use of the PDSA Cycle
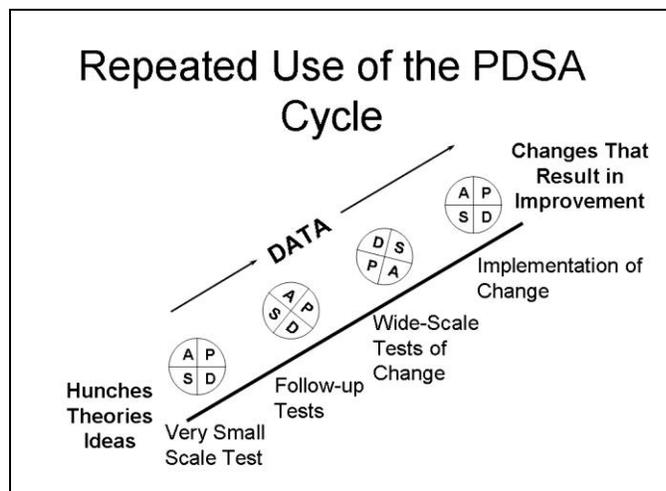
5) When you have tested the change in many situations and are sure it is the best solution, the change can be implemented. This means the change becomes normal practice. To ensure the change is sustained you should rewrite procedure manuals, train other staff in the change and add it to new staff orientation processes.

6) We may have an opportunity to spread our idea to another situation or another community. Only successful changes are spread. The new setting will need to test the idea in their environment to see if it works as well for them. PDSA cycles will help them determine how to adapt the idea to their practice.

The Model for Improvement has helped many organizations improve their processes and outcomes. There is much more detail around each part of the Model for Improvement but these basics are enough to get started on improvement.

References:
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The Improvement Guide, Langley et al, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.
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