ACCELERATING QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (Rapid Cycle Improvement)

The Model for Improvement, *developed by Associates in Process Improvement, is a simple yet powerful tool for accelerating improvement. The model is not meant to replace change models that organizations may already be using, but rather to accelerate improvement. This model has been used very successfully by health care organizations in many countries to improve many different health care processes and outcomes.

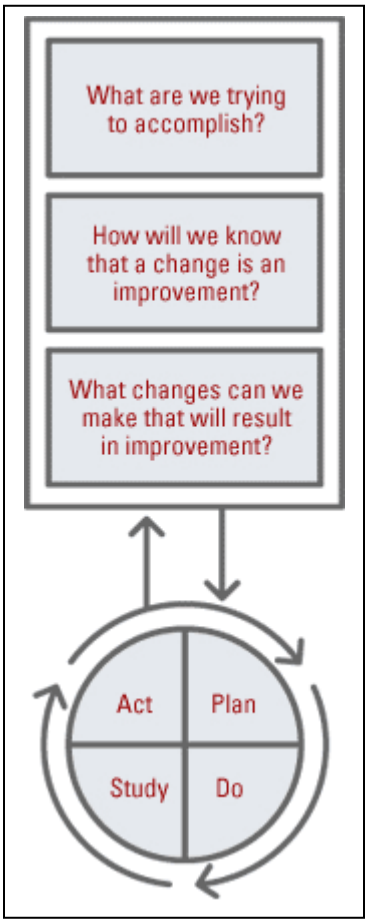
The model has two parts:

- Three fundamental questions (see below), which can be addressed in any order.
- The 'Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle to test and implement changes in real work settings. The PDCA cycle guides the test of a change to determine if the change is an improvement.

Including the right people on a process improvement team is critical to a successful improvement effort. Teams should be built to suit the needs and can vary in size & composition.

FORMING THE TEAM:

1. First, review the aim.
2. Second, consider the system that relates to that aim. *What processes will be affected by the improvement efforts?*
3. Third, be sure that the team includes members familiar with all the different parts of the process — managers and administrators as well as those who work in the process, including nephrologists, surgeons, dialysis nurses, dialysis technicians, social workers, dietitians. *Are patients to be involved and/or familiar with the processes?*



Setting Aims: Improvement requires setting aims. The aim should be time-specific and measurable; it should also define the specific population of patients that will be affected.

Establishing Measures: Teams use quantitative measures to determine if a specific change actually leads to an improvement.

Selecting Changes: All improvement requires making changes, but not all changes result in improvement. Organizations therefore must identify the changes that are most likely to result in improvement.

Testing Changes: The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle is shorthand for testing a change in the real work setting – by planning it, trying it, observing the results, and acting on what is learned. This is the scientific method used for action-oriented learning.

Implementing Changes: After testing a change on a small scale, learning from each test, and refining the change through several PDSA cycles, the team can implement the change on a broader scale — for example, for an entire pilot population or on an entire unit.

Spreading Changes: After successful implementation of a change or package of changes for a pilot population or an entire unit, the team can spread the changes to other parts of the organization or in other organizations.