

Fact sheet

Frequently asked questions

Root Cause Analysis

Patient Fact Sheet

What is a Root Cause Analysis (RCA)?

The RCA methodology is one way of reviewing a patient incident that uses a defined process to find out:

- what happened during care to cause patient harm
- why it happened
- how it can be prevented from happening again.

The RCA methodology is used to help the health system learn from an incident so that the safety and quality of patient care can be improved.

A team of health care staff are convened to undertake the RCA which occurs over a series of meetings. The RCA team, who have expert skills, knowledge and training consider any issues within the health system that contributed to the incident. They provide suggestions about what can be done to prevent or reduce the severity of a similar incident from happening again.

The focus of an RCA is not to lay blame on staff but to identify areas for improving systems, processes and resources involved in the delivery of healthcare.

What is an incident?

A patient incident is an event or circumstance that could have or did result in patient harm. Patient incidents can occur while the patient is admitted to hospital, in outpatients or when receiving services in the community or residential aged care.

Can I be involved in the RCA

Everyone involved in a patient 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 a member of the team. You can tell them your experience about what happened and give them any suggestions you may have about how to prevent the incident from happening again.

How long will an RCA take?

This will depend on what the incident was and the RCA complexity. The RCA team attempts to complete the process as quickly as possible. The RCA can take up to three months to complete before the final report is available. In some instances, the report may take longer than three months, this may be dependant on the complexity of the incident or the report approval process.

Will I be told what the RCA Team found?

The RCA can be conducted under protection from legislation or conducted without protection. If the RCA is conducted under the *Health Care Act 2008* (with protection) you can't be told about all the information discovered during the investigation. However, you will be told what recommendations the RCA team has made to prevent a similar incident happening again and receive a copy of the RCA report that can be provided under the legislation.

If the RCA is conducted without protection, you can be told about the information discovered during the RCA and receive a copy of an RCA Report.

Related Documents

[Root Cause Analysis Guideline](#)

[Clinical incident management webpage](#)

[Health Care Act 2008, Government of South Australia](#)

[Health Care Regulations 2008, Government of South Australia](#)

For more information

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