Fishbone diagram

What is a fishbone diagram?

Fishbone diagrams (also called cause and effect analysis) are used to help to identify and display the root causes of a problem. They are useful when there are multiple causes of a problem and help to ensure important potential factors are not ignored.
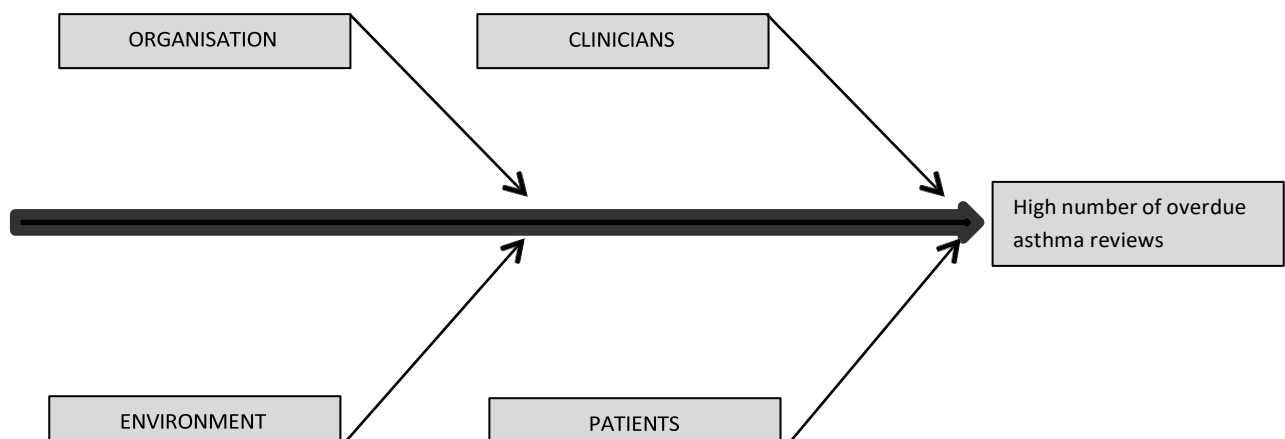
How to create a fishbone diagram

The example below shows the use of a fishbone diagram to understand why there are so many overdue asthma reviews.

Identify the problem

This becomes the head of the fish – 'High number overdue asthma reviews'.

> High number of overdue asthma reviews

Gather the relevant people together and generate the major categories of potential causes. In the example shown these are environment, organisation, clinicians and patients. Other useful categories include equipment and time. These form the spines of the fish.

Discuss each major category, adding the ideas generated as sub-branches. Each sub-branch may be further broken down into its contributing factors.

For every spine and sub-branch identified, ask yourself 'Why does this happen?' and consider the question from different perspectives such as patient, administrator, nurse, doctor, Integrated Care Board (ICB). This will produce the layers of causes that will help you to fully understand the root of the problem and its dependencies.

Use your completed diagram to help you to generate ideas for improvement, which may then result in the development of a driver diagram to plan your improvements.

ORGANISATION

CLINICIANS

GPs forget to code the review

Not enough appointments outside working hours

Nurses not available outside working hours

High number overdue asthma reviews

No resources to extend

Not enough consulting rooms

Prefer to manage their asthma exacerbations rather than self-care

ENVIRONMENT

PATIENTS

Patients don't understand the value of an annual review