COMMENTARY

Developing and Implementing a Peer Review for Nuclear Medicine Technologists

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Our department planned and implemented a peer review process as a part of our hospital's pay for performance program. The review program allows employees to participate in the evaluation process; formerly, only supervisory personnel were involved. We created a format and guidelines specifically tailored to nuclear medicine. After several revisions, we have implemented a quarterly peer review. This program provides a method to self-regulate, communicate, and promote changes that will ultimately improve the quality of patient care. The purpose of this paper is to describe our program for the benefit of those who would like to institute a similar program.

When approached to implement a peer review process as an integral part of our institution's pay for performance program, we discovered that a peer review format tailored to the needs of a nuclear medicine department did not exist. As we researched peer review designed for nurses and physicians, it became apparent that these forms were not suitable for our needs (*1*). Whereas most peer reviews are based on case studies, we needed to develop a process to evaluate overall clinical performance of standard tasks during a defined period of time (*2*).

Creating a useable format seemed a formidable task at first glance. However, we created standards for performance, based on established job description guidelines for a nuclear medicine technologist (*3*). From these standards, a form was developed, and peer review began on a trial basis in October 1989.

Several phases of development were needed to allow our technologists to become acclimated to the process of evaluating their peers. During the period between October 1989 and March 1990, several peer reviews were completed. However, they had no bearing on employee evaluations until the form itself met with the overall satisfaction of the individuals involved.

Our first major stumbling block was discovering that our original rating system, which was based on a scale of 1 to 5,

was interpreted differently by each reviewer. Guidelines were established to define each job duty, and the number format was changed. A further revision addressed the necessity of qualifying a below average rating with an explanatory comment. By the third review, we were comfortable with the process and had learned how to write positive and productive comments.

Our current review procedure requires each technologist to complete a peer review form for every other technologist in the department (Fig. 1). These completed forms are then submitted to the supervisor. A summary of the comments and the average score are recorded on a separate form in order to maintain confidentiality.

Included with the current form is a copy of the "Guidelines for Peer Review" (Appendix). The guidelines were developed to try to eliminate uncertainty as to which rating to assign in a particular situation. The examples assist the technologists in evaluating their peers in a professional and consistent manner.

Once the process was refined to a useful format, many benefits became apparent. A peer review, done correctly as a form of quality assurance, can promote professional growth. It is not to be used to find fault with one another's work habits, but to improve the quality of work performed in the department.

It also allows the employee to participate in other employee evaluations; formerly only supervisory personnel were involved. Technologists are made aware of how their peers perceive their job performance. Exceptional performance in an area is recognized. Conversely, deficits are also noted so that technologists can improve their performance in a particular area.

Every peer review program faces the probability of personality conflicts playing a destructive role. Constructive criticism and a professional attitude should be stressed to avoid the loss of departmental unity. Personal remarks can create personality conflicts or broaden existing ones. It is, therefore, extremely important to give proper guidance in writing comments, especially to individuals who have not been previously involved in a peer review.

Our conclusion is that peer review done on a quarterly basis promotes continual awareness of performance, thus allowing individuals to view themselves through the eyes of

TECHNOLOGIST: _____ PEER REVIEW DATES: _____ TO_____

1. INTERACTS WITH PATIENTS AND FAMILY IN A KIND, FRIENDLY AND PROFESSIONAL MANNER.

   ALWAYS   ALMOST ALWAYS   USUALLY   OCCASIONALLY   RARELY

   COMMENTS: _____

2. PRACTICES HOSPITALITY AND PROMOTES A POSITIVE IMAGE WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND PHYSICIANS.

   ALWAYS   ALMOST ALWAYS   USUALLY   OCCASIONALLY   RARELY

   COMMENTS: _____

3. STAYS CURRENT WITH PROTOCOL CHANGES WITHIN DEPARTMENT AND RELAYS INFORMATION TO FELLOW TECHNOLOGISTS.

   ALWAYS   ALMOST ALWAYS   USUALLY   OCCASIONALLY   RARELY

   COMMENTS: _____

4. COMPLETES DAILY JOB ASSIGNMENTS IN A SAFE, PROFICIENT, AND TIMELY MANNER.

   ALWAYS   ALMOST ALWAYS   USUALLY   OCCASIONALLY   RARELY

   COMMENTS: _____

5. CREATES POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE WITHIN DEPARTMENT BY TAKING FAIR SHARE OF WORKLOAD.

   ALWAYS   ALMOST ALWAYS   USUALLY   OCCASIONALLY   RARELY

   COMMENTS: _____

6. MAINTAINS WORK AREA IN A CLEAN AND ORDERLY MANNER.

   ALWAYS   ALMOST ALWAYS   USUALLY   OCCASIONALLY   RARELY

   COMMENTS: _____

7. EXHIBITS WILLINGNESS TO ASSUME EXTRA RESPONSIBILITY OR SPECIAL PROJECTS.

   ALWAYS   ALMOST ALWAYS   USUALLY   OCCASIONALLY   RARELY

   COMMENTS: _____

8. UTILIZES DOWN TIME PRODUCTIVELY.

   ALWAYS   ALMOST ALWAYS   USUALLY   OCCASIONALLY   RARELY

   COMMENTS: _____

9. EXHIBITS WILLINGNESS TO WORK OVER DUE TO PATIENT LOAD.

   ALWAYS   ALMOST ALWAYS   USUALLY   OCCASIONALLY   RARELY

   COMMENTS: _____

10. PLANS, SCHEDULES, ASSIGNS AND COORDINATES THE DAILY WORK OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS, TECHNOLOGISTS AND STUDENTS, WHEN ACTING AS CHARGE TECHNOLOGIST.

   ALWAYS   ALMOST ALWAYS   USUALLY   OCCASIONALLY   RARELY

   COMMENTS: _____

FIG. 1. Peer Review Data Form.

their peers. The quarterly format provides more opportunity for input and improvement than the annual evaluation process. Review by peers stimulates professional growth and improvements that benefit patients. It can be an excellent way to strengthen communication among employees, demonstrate accountability, and promote employee involvement.

APPENDIX

Guidelines for Peer Review

1. Interacts with patients and family in a kind, friendly professional manner.
   - Explains procedures to patients and families, answers questions and concerns.
2. Practices hospitality and promotes a positive image with other departments and physicians.
   - Escorts and/or gives directions to patients and families.
   - Assists and coordinates procedures with other departments.
   - Establishes and maintains cooperative working relationships with physicians and other hospital personnel.
3. Stays current with protocol changes within department and relays changes to fellow technologists.
   - Performs procedures in accordance with established protocols and policies.
   - Reviews patient charts to verify type of examination or treatment to be performed.
   - Remains alert for contraindications and suspected pathologies.
4. Completes daily job assignments in a safe, proficient, and timely manner.
   - Observes and records patient data before, during, and after procedure.
   - Uses proper lifting and transporting techniques to reduce injuries to patients and staff.
   - Applies proper radiation safety techniques.
5. Creates positive atmosphere within department by taking fair share of workload.
   - Ensures that proper supplies are maintained in examination rooms.
   - Takes initiative: doesn't wait to be told what to do.
   - Assists co-workers as needed.
6. Maintains work area in a clean and orderly manner.
   - Hot lab.
   - Imaging rooms.
   - Miscellaneous.
7. Exhibits willingness to assume extra responsibility or special projects.
   - Prepares in-service programs.
   - Performs camera quality control.
   - Updates procedure manual on regular basis.
   - Prepares and presents classes for student technologists.
8. Utilizes down time productively.
   - Reviews journal articles.
   - Performs routine P.M. inspections of equipment and department supplies.
9. Exhibits willingness to work overtime due to patient load.
   - Takes extra call, or back up call if someone calls in sick.
   - Stays late for "stat" procedures at the end of day.
10. Plans, schedules, assigns, and coordinates the daily work of technical assistants, technologists, and students when acting as charge technologist.
    - Organizes and delegates daily work schedule.
    - Orders supplies as needed.
    - Arranges patient preps and procedure times.

REFERENCES

1. Blanton NE, Bogner MJ, Collins HL, et al. Putting peer review into practice. *Am J Nurs* 1985;11:1284–1287.
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3. Matthews JA, Vann Bonds S, Cianci ML, et al. Performance and responsibility standards for the nuclear medicine technologist. *J Nucl Med Technol* 1982;3:163–169.