COLLEGE of AMERICAN PATHOLOGISTS

Mistake Proofing to Mitigate Risk

A Step-by-Step Approach

Overall Process

Map the Process

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Identify Risk Points

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Apply Mistake-Proofing Tactics

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Check Effectiveness (A B C D E)

Mistake-Proofing Tactics

STEP 1

Eliminate mistake-prone steps.

Simplify the process. Remove unnecessary steps.

STEP 2

Constrain the process.

Use physical or logical constraints to prevent slips or faulty decision making.

STEP 3

Make it easy to do the right thing.

- Use 5S—improve visibility
- Standardize the process
- Use prompts, color coding, warnings, and feedback
- Improve documents
- Improve training
- Choose intuitive tools
- Optimize ergonomics
- Eliminate look-alikes
- Eliminate multitasking

STEP 4

Build in checks and back-up.

Add self-checks and successive checks.

STEP 5

Make mistakes apparent.

Create sensory alerts or shut down the process.

This step-by-step approach to mistake proofing was developed in collaboration with the expertise and experience of the CAP 15189 Committee.

Bring mistake proofing expertise to your organization—the CAP's QM*Ed*™ online course on mistake proofing will increase your ability to design new processes, modify existing processes, minimize mistakes, and manage your risks. Earn four CE credits with the completion of this course.

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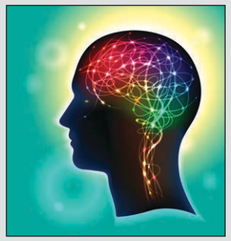
Key Concepts

Successful mistake proofing requires new ways of thinking and new concepts.

Shift from "knowledge in the head" to "knowledge in the world."

One of the hallmarks of mistake proofing is seeking ways to put knowledge into the world—to embed it into the task environment.

Knowledge in the Head



What I remember from training or other learning—information contained in human memory.

Knowledge in the World

What I see in the task environment that helps me know what to do—any kind of information provided as part of the task environment.

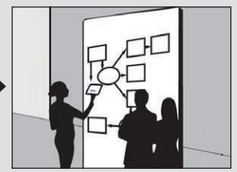
Shift from "culture of individual excellence" to "culture of process excellence."

Another hallmark of mistake proofing is to better balance a focus on individual excellence with a focus on process excellence.

Culture of Individual Excellence

Find and reward individuals who have the right combination of skills, traits, and motivation.

Culture of Process Excellence



Focus on process design and mistake proofing—make it easy to do things the right way and hard to do them the wrong way.

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