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*Beyond Root Cause Analysis* helps risk managers, quality professionals, nursing leadership, oversight committees, and senior leadership understand how to approach adverse events, figure out what caused them, and implement realistic improvements.

**Benefits:**
- Step-by-step approach to setting up a cause analysis program
- Practical insight on how to develop meaningful corrective actions
- Easy-to-read format and style that differentiate this book from other root cause analysis products

Other books by Ken Rohde

*Occurrence Reporting*
*Effective Process Management*
BEYOND ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS
BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM
KENNETH R. ROHDE
CONTENTS

About the Author ........................................................................................................... vii

Chapter 1: Why Another Book on Cause Analysis? ....................................................... 1
  Integrated Program Approach ....................................................................................... 2
  Focused on Healthcare Cause Analysis ....................................................................... 2
  Fast and Simple to Use ............................................................................................... 3
  Designed for What You Need to Know ....................................................................... 4
  Simplified Summary and Action Plan Approach ......................................................... 4
  Who Will Benefit From the Book ................................................................................. 4

Chapter 2: Why We Need a Good Cause Analysis Program .......................... 5
  Why We Need a Good Cause Analysis Program ....................................................... 6
  What Makes a Good Cause Analysis Program .......................................................... 7

Chapter 3: The Big Picture: How Cause Analysis Fits Into the Overall
  Problem Identification and Resolution Process ......................................................... 11
  The Problem Identification and Resolution Process ................................................. 12

Chapter 4: Basic Concepts: Correlation, Causality, and Culpability ............. 15
  Correlation .................................................................................................................. 16
  Causality ...................................................................................................................... 17
  Culpability .................................................................................................................. 23
# Contents

**Chapter 5: Different Levels of Cause Analysis: It’s Not Just About Root Cause Analysis**

- Individual Analysis vs. Aggregation Analysis .......................................................... 27
- Suppositional Analysis ................................................................................................. 28
- Apparent Cause Analysis ............................................................................................. 29
- Root Cause Analysis ..................................................................................................... 30
- Aggregation Analysis ..................................................................................................... 35

**Chapter 6: Determining What Kind of Analysis to Perform**

- Downside of Choosing the Wrong Kind of Analysis .................................................. 39
- Balancing the Needs for Cause Analysis ...................................................................... 40
- Model Decision Algorithm .......................................................................................... 44
- Making Sure Your Cause Analysis Program Makes Good Business Sense .................. 46

**Chapter 7: Cause Analysis Workflow**

- Plan the Analysis ......................................................................................................... 49
- Collect Information ....................................................................................................... 51
- Develop Facts ............................................................................................................... 52
- Build Causal Relationships ......................................................................................... 52
- Develop Corrective Actions ......................................................................................... 53
- Implement Corrections .................................................................................................. 54
- Evaluate Effectiveness ................................................................................................. 54
- Aggregate Data ............................................................................................................. 54
- The Three-Meeting Team Workflow ........................................................................... 55

**Chapter 8: Fact Collection and Interviewing**

- Good Facts Lead to a Good Analysis .......................................................................... 57
- Where We Get Our Facts .............................................................................................. 60
- When We Get Our Facts .............................................................................................. 61
- Collecting and Managing Facts .................................................................................... 65

**Chapter 9: Basic Cause Analysis Tools**

- Two Approaches to Cause Analysis ........................................................................... 67
- Time-Based Analysis Tools ......................................................................................... 68
- Failure Modes–Based Analysis Tools ........................................................................... 69
- Putting It All Together: Causal Linkage Diagrams ....................................................... 78
- Progression of Tools for Time-Based Analyses ............................................................ 87

**Chapter 10: Developing Meaningful Corrective Actions**

- The Corrective Action .................................................................................................. 91
- How Corrective Actions Go Bad ................................................................................... 92
- Spending the Time to Get Corrective Actions Right .................................................... 93
- Criteria for Good Corrective Actions .......................................................................... 96

**Chapter 11: The Causal Linkage Diagram**

- Putting It All Together ................................................................................................ 99
- The Causal Linkage Diagram ...................................................................................... 100
- Example ..................................................................................................................... 101
- Discussion .................................................................................................................. 107
**CONTENTS**

**Chapter 12: Summary and Action Plan** ............................................................... 109  
No Partial Credit if Nothing Changes.................................................................... 109  
Adding a Summary to the Action Plan ................................................................. 110  
Event Summary .................................................................................................... 110  
Action Plan ......................................................................................................... 113  
Commitments ....................................................................................................... 119  
When to Use a Summary and Action Plan ......................................................... 120  
Summary and Action Plan Feeds Your Aggregation and Oversight .................. 120  

**Chapter 13: The Power of Aggregation Analysis** ........................................... 123  
The Importance of Aggregation Analysis .............................................................. 123  
The Importance of Coding .................................................................................. 127  

**Chapter 14: Managing the Cause Analysis Program** .................................... 137  
Effective Management of the Cause Analysis Program ...................................... 137  
Building a Strong Oversight Committee ............................................................ 138  
Quality or Risk: Who Should Run the Cause Analysis Program?...................... 139  
Setting Clear Expectations .................................................................................. 140  
Effective Oversight Process Flow ....................................................................... 142  
Cause Analysis Teams and Leaders ..................................................................... 143  
Building an Effective ACA Process ................................................................... 148  
Quality Review of Corrective Actions/Cause Analysis ..................................... 148  
Building Management Buy-in ............................................................................ 150  

**Chapter 15: Legal and Regulatory Implications** ........................................... 153  
This Is Not Legal Advice ..................................................................................... 153  
Protecting the Process and the Results ............................................................... 154  
Accreditation Implications .................................................................................. 156  
How Do We Share the Results? .......................................................................... 158  

**Chapter 16: Managing Your Corrective Actions Portfolio** ............................ 161  
Your Corrective Actions Portfolio ..................................................................... 162  
The Corrective Actions List ................................................................................... 162  
Analyze Your Portfolio ....................................................................................... 162  
Prioritization ....................................................................................................... 163  
Monitor Your Portfolio ....................................................................................... 165  

**Chapter 17: Automating the Process** ............................................................... 167  
Problem Identification and Resolution Is a Repetitive Process ......................... 167  
Effective Automation of Your Processes ............................................................ 167  
Automation of Apparent Cause Analysis ............................................................ 168  
Integration With Other Automated Systems ...................................................... 169
Kenneth R. Rohde

Kenneth R. Rohde is president of KR Rohde LLC, a consulting company specializing in helping organizations deal with their problems. He brings more than 32 years of experience in quality management to his work with hospitals, medical centers, power plants and high-risk manufacturing facilities across the country. Rohde’s roles in performance improvement and project management make him uniquely qualified to assist medical staffs and hospital leaders in developing solutions to their toughest challenges. He instructs, speaks, and consults in the areas of error reduction strategies, root cause analysis, improving performance through process simplification, effective procedure writing, apparent cause analysis, engineering effectiveness and error reduction, failure modes and effects analysis, effective data collection, analysis and trending, and patient safety evaluation and improvement.

Previously, Rohde was a senior consultant with The Greeley Company, and has served as a director for Performance Improvement International and director of corrective actions processes at Westinghouse Electric Company. He has also participated in or managed projects to improve business effectiveness and business development for healthcare, nuclear power, and manufacturing facilities around the globe.

CHAPTER 1
Why Another Book on Cause Analysis?

In this chapter:

- Why this book is different
- How the book is designed to help you find what you want

“I don’t do root causes, but I need to manage the overall process,” said the risk manager.
“I need a quick refresher before I do a big analysis.”
“I’m a pro at root cause analysis. I just need to figure out the rest.”
“My boss just told me I own it. What to do, what to do?”

The plane crashes, the ship sinks, the train derails, the power plant leaks—all of these are major events we hear about in the news. Somewhere, behind the scenes, you know that there will be a team of people working to deal with the event.

Healthcare is no different. Every day in hospitals, physician practices, clinics, and care facilities, serious events happen—some with very severe outcomes. Just like in other industries, there is also (hopefully) a whole infrastructure in place to deal with the event, determine why it happened, and improve the safety of the patients, staff, physicians, and community. This infrastructure includes the risk managers, nursing leadership, oversight committees, and senior leadership of the healthcare organization.

This book focuses on helping all the players understand how to approach events that occur, figure out what caused them, and implement realistic improvements. We naturally try to do this, but our
efforts are often piecemeal—more like a game of whack-a-mole than a focused effort. An event happens, we have some root cause meetings, someone gets frustrated, we choose some corrective actions, they never get done, and the event happens all over again. Then, of course, the chief medical officer says, “I thought you fixed that!”

There is a better way. In this book, we take the basics that you are likely familiar with and knit them into an integrated approach to dealing with events. The goal of this integrated approach is to provide a robust, sustainable, and workable program.

This book is designed to:
- Fit all the pieces into an integrated program
- Focus on how healthcare really does cause analysis
- Be fast and simple to use
- Provide what you need to know

## Integrated Program Approach

### Cause analysis is part of something bigger

Sometimes we forget that root cause analysis (RCA) is just one part of our overall process to identify and resolve problems. When we lose the connection to the rest of the process, RCAs can take on a life of their own. They can get scary, complicated, slow, and often ineffective.

In this book, we try to make sure that the leadership and cause analysis teams understand how all the parts fit together and that RCAs, while important, are seen as just one part of a bigger integrated approach.

### All the parts must work together

If RCAs are the only tool available to help the organization understand the underlying causes of problems, that puts everyone in a bind. RCAs take time, so the organization does fewer of them. That leads to less understanding of problems, which results in less effective solutions and slower improvement.

In this book, we will focus on how to get the following three key methods to work together in a graded approach:
1. Apparent cause analysis
2. RCA
3. Aggregation analysis

## Focused on Healthcare Cause Analysis

The basics of understanding why things happen are well developed and apply to virtually all complex systems. An aviation event, a power event, a factory event, and a healthcare event all use very
Why Another Book on Cause Analysis?

similar tools and methods. However, like everything in our industry, a healthcare event is “just a little different.”

In healthcare, events usually have a direct impact on a patient. In addition, we have the hospital to deal with as well as the physicians. Layered on top of that are healthcare’s liability and regulatory aspects, which are more at the forefront than in other industries.

In this book, we strive to take the basic, proven tools and processes and package them in a fashion appropriate to the healthcare world. The tools and tips in these pages are not radically different, but they are practical for our industry.

Fast and Simple to Use

**Designed for just-in-time knowledge**

There is no lack of books and training classes on how to do a cause analysis, but unfortunately in healthcare, we never have enough time for training. In an ideal world, the senior leadership and oversight committees would be extensively trained in understanding and managing the problem identification and resolution process; all the team leads would be experts, each one heading his or her own experienced team. The reality, of course, is not quite as polished. Often folks are thrown into the world of problem identification and resolution and cause analysis with little formal knowledge or experience.

I would love to see this state of affairs changed in the future, but until then, the goal of this book is to provide just-in-time information that you can use to help you do the best job possible. The book is designed with clearly marked tips so that you can thumb through it before your cause analysis team meetings or whenever you need some additional thoughts about dealing with events.

**Designed as a reference guide**

The book is designed to support you throughout the whole process of implementation, management, and action.

Chapters 1 through 6 provide a high-level overview of what cause analyses are designed to achieve. This is useful to ensure that the senior leadership and oversight committees are all on the same page and that the expectations for the team are consistent.

Chapters 7 through 13 deal with the practicalities of performing analyses, developing action plans, aggregating causes across multiple analyses, and making sure that the overall process is effective.

Chapters 14 through 17 deal with programmatic matters—how to set up the program, who should do what, etc.
Designed for What You Need to Know

As you go through the book, you will notice that it has tips clearly indicated as below:

Tip:

In addition, the tips are labeled to help focus the different users of the book on areas that likely apply to them. That does not mean that the tip is only for those users, but it helps keep us all focused on what we, individually, need to do.

Simplified Summary and Action Plan Approach

Cause analyses, especially RCAs, often seem to get too big to manage. Then, when we finally finish them, it seems like we spend forever explaining what needs to be done. As one of its key benefits, this book provides a simplified summary and action plan approach that is designed to put all the information together in one place. This approach ultimately boils your analysis down into two documents:

1) One-page causal linkage diagram
2) Simplified summary and action plan

The goal of this approach is to help you organize your work, communicate it effectively, see the big picture, and (hopefully!) get problems fixed to a greater degree.

Who Will Benefit From the Book

Oversight committees
In every organization, there is likely a quality or patient safety oversight committee that, at some level, has been commissioned by the board to ensure that the problem identification and resolution process is working well. Key concepts for this committee are called out with the text “Oversight Committees” in the book’s tip boxes.

Cause analysis process owners
At the next level, perhaps in risk management or quality, there will be a process owner who is responsible for making sure that the cause analyses actually get done. This person will likely be responsible for keeping things on track and reporting to the oversight committee. Key process owner concepts are called out with the text “Process Owners” in the book’s tip boxes.

Cause analysis team leads and team members
The cause analysis team leads and team members are the ones who actually ask the questions, pull the strings, and put together the clues that lead to good solutions. Key analysis team concepts are called out with the text “Analysis Teams” in the book’s tip boxes.
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