Problem Solving Tools

Process Mapping

How to make the improvements to your everyday workflow in general practice is an important matter you will need to consider. By using a quality improvement tool such as process mapping, the whole team will have a current picture of the overall workflow so they can identify problem areas and opportunities for process improvement.

It will also help the team to better understand how different parts of the practice work and assist them with identifying opportunities for integration and improvements.

It is useful to map out the process your practice currently undertakes for a particular activity as this will identify which team carries out which tasks. It will also assist in determining when a new process is identified through implementing a new activity and who will be responsible for each task.

Benefits of Process Mapping
- Helps to focus on how the end user (e.g. patient) views the process.   - Allows individuals working in different areas of the practice to understand roles and responsibilities of others.   - Useful for team members to identify their role in a process.   - Helps the teams understand what is actually happening, rather than what individuals thought was happening.   - Provides an opportunity for staff to express their views.   - Clarifies responsibilities and ownership.   - Assists in identifying how resources are used.   - Highlighting inefficiencies or gaps in the process and promoting discussion about how to improve these areas. By involving the various individuals involved in the process, the team is more likely to have shared ownership of the solutions.

How to create Process Maps

1. Decide on the process to be mapped and the team members to be involved in the activity. Consider team members such as managers and staff who work in the current process.
2. Define a clear starting point and endpoint to ensure the process does not become too large.
3. Beginning at the starting point, map out the process, ensure all details are captured as it actually occurs and not what the team thinks happens. Use the following key/symbols to map out the process.

Symbol	Meaning	Symbol	Meaning	Symbol	Meaning	Symbol	Meaning
●	Start/Finish	▢	Process/Action	◗	Delay	▱	Data
◆	Decision	▢	Document	→	Connector		

4. Review the complete process and as a team question if this is the right way of doing things, are the right people involved at the right times, can we make improvements?
5. As a team, agree on the changes needed and draw a new process representing these new processes. What impact will this new process have and are there any risks with implementing this change?
6. Test the new process. Has the new process worked or do changes need to be made?
7. Review and update the process as it is tested. Once a new successful process has been achieved, inform the team of the changes and ensure ongoing feedback is made available
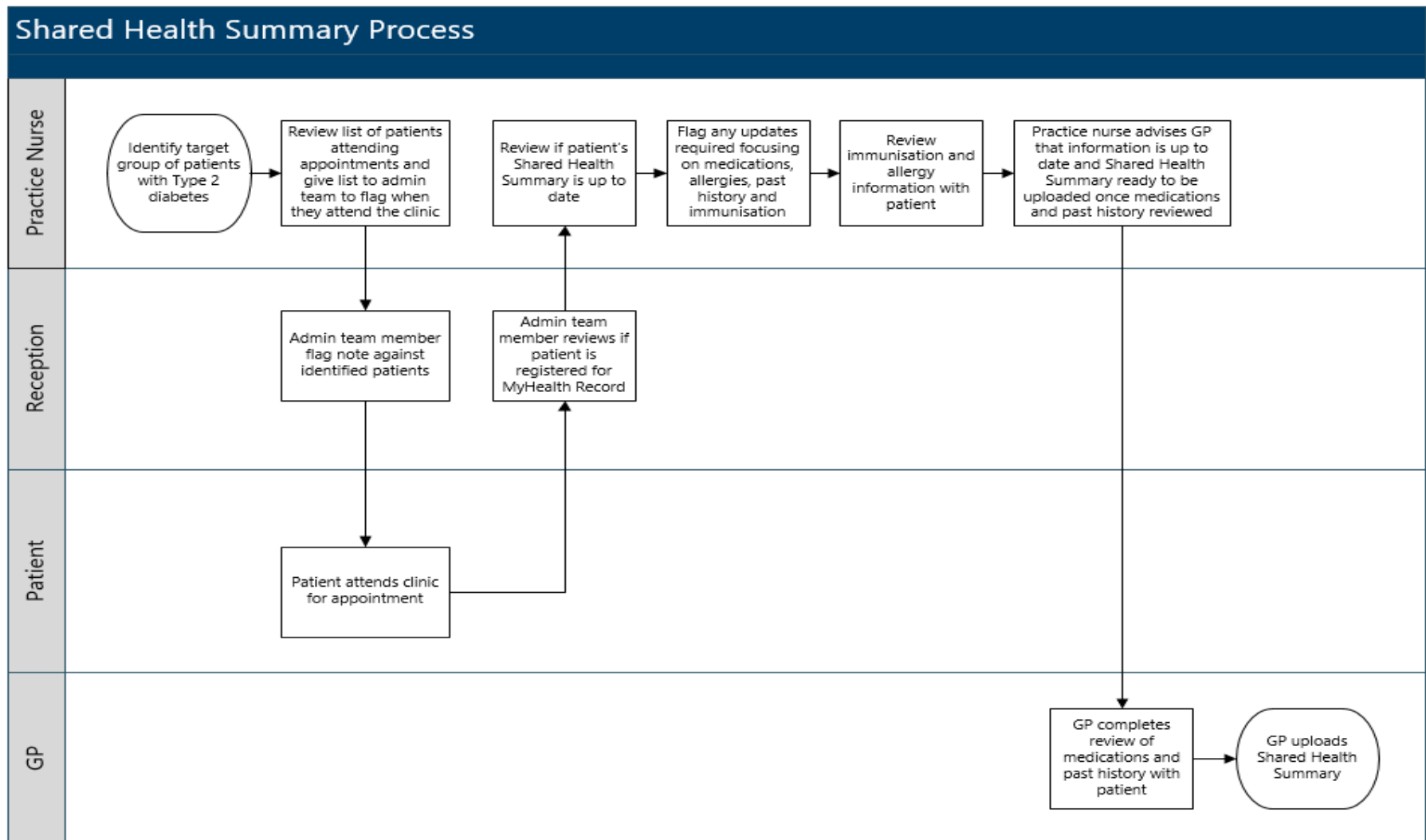
Tip: To illustrate a team member's responsibility of tasks or role within a process, create a process map using **swim lanes**. This demonstrates the process workflow by grouping steps into columns and rows called swim lanes that represents either a functional area or a team member. Refer to the below example for further clarification.

Process Mapping Example – Using swim lanes

Example

Be Well Health Service decided to use process mapping to assist their team members identify their role in shared health summary uploads for myHealth records. This example demonstrates the process incorporating multiple members of the general practice team. By providing a visual map of the current process within the practice, the team was able to add or update these steps and allocation of tasks as the process was reviewed.

Shared Health Summary Process

Practice Nurse

- Identify target group of patients with Type 2 diabetes
- Review list of patients attending appointments and give list to admin team to flag when they attend the clinic
- Review if patient's Shared Health Summary is up to date
- Flag any updates required focusing on medications, allergies, past history and immunisation
- Review immunisation and allergy information with patient
- Practice nurse advises GP that information is up to date and Shared Health Summary ready to be uploaded once medications and past history reviewed

Reception

- Admin team member flag note against identified patients
- Admin team member reviews if patient is registered for MyHealth Record

Patient

- Patient attends clinic for appointment

GP

- GP completes review of medications and past history with patient
- GP uploads Shared Health Summary

Swim Lane Process Mapping Sample Template

	Pre-consultation	Consultation	Post consultation
Patient			
Reception			
Practice Nurse			
GP			