

Quality tools from business – total quality management

Many of the techniques used in business can be transferred to the small business of general practice. The 10 steps to total quality management (TQM) in the table below can be applied to general practice too.

The 10 steps to TQM	
10 steps to quality	How to apply the step in general practice
1. Pursue new strategic thinking	Look at new ways of working
2. Know your customers	Obtain feedback from patients and the public
3. Set true customer requirements	Establish needs, not wants
4. Concentrate on prevention, not correction	Try to anticipate risk
5. Reduce chronic waste	Eliminate duplication of effort
6. Pursue a continuous improvement strategy	Have a rolling programme of improvement
7. Use structured methodology for process improvement	Work through problems in a structured way: plan, action, evaluate
8. Reduce variation	Maintain equity of access and provision
9. Use a balanced approach	Look at the big problems first
10. Apply to all functions	Keep a general approach rather than concentrating on just one aspect

A useful, non-commercial website with links to further information is: www.gslis.utexas.edu/~rpollock/tqm.html.