

Spring 2026

NEWSLETTER



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Spring Virtual Conference

The annual AzAHQ Spring Virtual Conference is on the books for April 30, 2026. Is it on your calendar yet?

This all day event features sessions and panels from outstanding leaders in the healthcare quality field!

Students can register for 50% off. Taking registrations through April 29.

For more details and registration go to www.azahq.org and go to Upcoming AzAHQ Event click on Events "Details and Registration" under the event name. We'll see you there!

Introducing AzAHQ 2026 Board Members

President: Nancy Claflin

President-Elect: Lucy Lonberger

Treasurer: Jason Hoover

Treasurer-Elect: Kathleen Harrington

Secretary: Keith Chartier

Education Director: Judy Henderson

Associate Education Director: Misty Mason

Communications Director: Kimberly Johnson

Associate Communications Director: Rita Morris

Membership Director: Pearl Darling

Director at Large: Nicole Lies

Association Manager: Holly Gremis

Open Board Position

Are you looking for professional growth and focused networking? We have an open position on our board for secretary elect. In this role, you would work closely with our current secretary, learning about AzAHQ and promoting healthcare quality. If you would like more information, please email our association manager at HollyG@azahq.org.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear AZAHQ Members,

Wouldn't you like to have a crystal ball to tell you where quality will be going in the next five years? Even remembering the psychic who when asked, "Why aren't you using your crystal ball anymore?" replied "Because there's no future in it", here are my thoughts about the future of quality.

I see quality interwoven with the use of artificial intelligence (AI). Currently, healthcare systems and providers of healthcare across the country are rapidly integrating AI systems into everyday use. They are using AI because it works, and it is increasingly working better and better. Some examples of AI used in healthcare include reading scans, analyzing laboratory results, reviewing literature, and suggesting diagnoses. With this use of AI in healthcare there are warnings that the use of these tools may compromise safe patient care. Healthcare staff members using AI report that some AI tools may produce vague, inaccurate, or overly sensitive alerts, for example, which can lead to false positive results, wasted time, and lack of trust. In some organizations, AI tools are quickly put in place without testing performance in a healthcare setting with real world situations. In the healthcare setting, AI tools may lack the full context that healthcare professionals rely on, including subtle physical cues and patient interactions that are not documented in the medical record. Some algorithms may result in biased outcomes. The use of AI in healthcare may also bypass traditional safeguards for new medical technologies.

Because healthcare quality professionals embrace technology and welcome tools that are validated and demonstrably improve care, we are uniquely qualified to help organizations and staff work with AI. Healthcare quality professionals are the problem solvers helping people and organizations identify problems and develop solutions to make improvements. Healthcare quality professionals will be able to help organizations use AI successfully with our expertise in using PDSA, lean methodology, and Six Sigma to solve problems.

In the more immediate future, how can you ensure you're on the cutting edge of healthcare quality? Some opportunities include:

- 1) Save the dates for our virtual spring conference on April 30 and our fall conference on November 6 (in-person or virtual).
- 2) Obtain your Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ®) credential. AZAHQ is here to support you and your colleagues in your quality journey by offering the Quality Journey education program, a 12-hour virtual offering covering information on topics in the CPHQ® content outline in four-hour segments from 8a-12pm on May 29, 30, and 31.
- 3) Attend webinars and educational conferences offered by AZAHQ and via our continuing partnership with other state healthcare quality associations. Most sessions are FREE to active members. These opportunities support you by not only providing education and networking opportunities but also by offering FREE continuing education credits for quality professionals who hold already the CPHQ® credential.
- 4) Finally, we are looking to fill the secretary-elect position on the AZAHQ Board for 2026, and we invite you to you to join us in this exciting time. Board members receive complimentary registration for our two annual conferences, have great networking opportunities, and get to experience professional growth by collaborating with other healthcare quality professionals. Please think about joining us to help promote healthcare quality in Arizona and across the country this year. Send an email if you are interested, or know someone who might be interested, to AZAHQ's Association Manager, Holly Grems at HollyG@azahq.org.

Thank you for all you do to promote healthcare quality every day.

Nancy Clafin, DNP, MS, RN, NEA-BC, CENP, CNEcl, CCRN, CPHQ, FNAHQ
AZAHQ President 2025-2026



Board Member Spotlight

AzAHQ Board Member Spotlight: Lucy Lonberger, MPA President-Elect

Professional Background in Quality

Lucy Lonberger has built her career around advancing clinical quality, patient experience, and health equity across the care continuum. As a Clinical Quality Manager, she partners with clinical teams, health plans, and community programs to improve outcomes through data-driven insights, meaningful performance metrics, and collaborative improvement strategies. Her work focuses on elevating the voice of patients, using experience measures such as CAHPS to guide equity-centered improvement. She is particularly passionate about integrating behavioral, social, and health-related needs into quality strategies—ensuring that care is not only effective, but person-centered, respectful, and accessible to all. Her recent efforts include leveraging Medicaid Health Risk Assessment (HRA) data to identify unmet needs, connect members to appropriate services, and support value-based initiatives aligned with the CMS MAC QRS framework. She enjoys bridging analytics and operations to turn data into action.

Time with AzAHQ

Lucy joined the AzAHQ Board of Directors in 2024 and quickly became engaged in strengthening the organization's educational programming, statewide presence, and mission to elevate quality professionals across Arizona. She currently serves as President-Elect, and has worked in coordinating the annual webinar series, the Spring Virtual Conference, and the in-person Fall Conference. In 2025, she stepped into the role of President-Elect. She is excited to help lead AzAHQ's strategic growth, expand partnerships, and continue building a community where quality leaders can learn from one another, share best practices, and drive meaningful improvement across Arizona's healthcare landscape.

The quote at the right reflects her belief that excellence in healthcare comes from deliberate, consistent actions grounded in compassion and continuous learning.

“
*Quality is not an
act, it is a habit.*”
Aristotle
”



Meet the ones that are leading AzAHQ to success!

Lucy Lonberger, MPA

President-Elect

Membership Offerings

MemberSHIPS: Let's Sail on Growth, Learning, and Connections!

They say the best ships are friendships, but we think memberships are a close second!

Earlier this year, we proudly launched our **Organizational Member Program**, offering organizations valuable benefits designed to support their team's growth, learning, and visibility. With two flexible membership tiers, organizations can choose the option that best fits their size and needs.

Our **Student Membership** option is designed for aspiring professionals breaking into the healthcare quality field. Join today with 50% off the cost of the full membership.

Don't forget our **Member-Get-a-Member** referral program which rewards you with discounts toward your next annual fee when you bring others into our growing community.

Let's chart your course together and join today!

<https://bit.ly/45mM4YB>



Healthcare Quality Collective Events

[QAHQ: Quality Strategic Priorities & Strategy Deployment \(4/22/26\)](#)

[QAHQ: Large-Scale Improvement Efforts.... \(5/12/26\)](#)

[OrAHQ: Ethics & Compliance re AI \(5/20/26\)](#)

[NEAHQ: Advancing Health Equity: Data-Driven Strategies... \(5/22/26\)](#)

[NCAHQ: Breaking Healthcare Silos: Incorporating Quality and Safety \(6/2/26\)](#)

[FAHQ: Survey Survival Tips in 2026.... \(7/15/26\)](#)

[OrAHQ: CPHQ Review Course \(8/6 to 8/7/26\)](#)

[OrAHQ: Quality on Autopilot - Are we missing..... \(9/16/26\)](#)

Education Forum

AzAHQ Events

Thursday, April 30, 2026

[AzAHQ 2026 Spring Conference: Quality's Role in Organizational Culture](#)
Virtual Event

Friday, May 29 to Sunday, May 31, 2026

[The AzAHQ Quality Journey Course - Spring 2026](#)

Wednesday, June 24, 2026

[Webinar: Mayo HealthLocator](#)



Center for Healthcare Improvement
and Patient Safety

The Penn Center for Healthcare Improvement & Patient Safety (Penn CHIPS) is an educational hub for healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, dentists, veterinarians, and administrators who are interested in improving care through quality improvement and patient safety methods. Through workshops, courses, and community events, Penn CHIPS helps build the skills needed to drive meaningful change in healthcare.

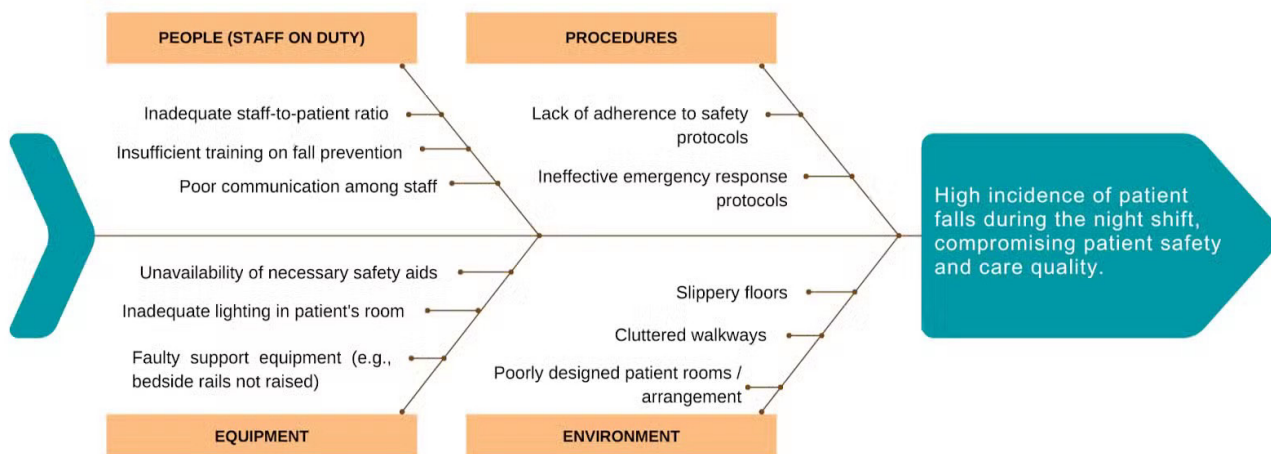
Join Penn CHIPS listserv to receive their newsletter, learn about upcoming workshops and courses, and stay connected with a community dedicated to improving healthcare quality and safety.



Fishbone Diagram: Quality Tool of the Month

The Fishbone or Ishikawa diagram is a visual tool that facilitates the analysis of potential causes of a problem. Used frequently to assist in root cause or barriers analysis and required for high quality qualitative analysis as is required by NCQA^R and many state regulators.

1. Begin with the problem to the far right (the fishhead) and utilize the classic categories of Methods, Machines, Materials and Manpower or customize to your industry or needs. Each of these buckets are "cause categories".
2. Next, conduct a brainstorming session with your diverse group of subject matter experts and begin filling out the "spines" of the fish. Explore any sub-causes if needed so you have a complete breakdown of each issue.
3. Then analyze and prioritize the found causes most likely to improve or solve your original problem and plan your intervention.
4. As with all performance improvement activities, ensure you have defined how you will measure your success (or lack thereof) so you can make adjustments as needed.



Free templates
are available
online