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The Gurus

To continue with the theme of Quality Gurus, this month we will introduce Ishikawa and it is up to you to decide whether his views are appropriate to your organization.

K. Ishikawa

K. Ishikawa was involved with the Japan Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) and helped write JUSE's book on Quality Circles. In the 50s and 60s the Japanese were going through a reconstruction of their industry in an attempt to remove the image the Western World had of them as being producers of poor quality products. They set up teams with defined objectives to be achieved. These teams then met voluntarily, in their own time, to discuss how to overcome and solve problems affecting them as a group. These meetings became known as Quality Circles. Quality circles are defined as follows:

- A small group of employees
- Who do similar work
- Voluntarily meeting regularly
- On company time
- With their supervisor as their leader
- Learning to identify and analyse work related problems
- Recommending solutions to their management and, where possible, implementing their own solutions.

There are seven tools of quality control that need to be taught to all circle members:

- Pareto analysis - see section on Pareto Analysis
- Cause and effect diagrams
- Stratification
- Check sheets
- Histograms
- Scatter diagrams
- Shewhart's control charts and graphs.

To start a Quality Circle, there are seven stages of activity involving members of the Quality Circle, although these stages sometimes merge and are repeated, these include:

- Selection of the theme or problem
- Planning the approach to the problem
- Analysis of the problem
- Determination of the measures to take to avoid the problem occurring
- Confirming that the measures were successful
- Determination of the rules that need to be applied to avoid recurrence
- Presentation of the Quality Circle activities.

New ISO standard for Salmonella detection

A newly revised International Standard for the detection of *Salmonella* will allow laboratories to decide if levels of Salmonella contamination are within the safety limits for humans or animals, providing a reference method to detect most strains of Salmonella present in food and feeds before

going onto the market for human and animal consumption. Published by ISO (International Organization for Standardization), ISO 6579, *Microbiology of food and animal feeding stuffs - Horizontal method for the detection of Salmonella spp* in its fourth edition has been updated to take into account a new safer and environmentally friendly test. The new standard is the work of ISO technical committee ISO/TC 34, *Food products*, subcommittee SC 9, *Microbiology. Salmonella* can cause Salmonellosis, which is an infection causing severe diarrhoea, which may require hospitalisation and in some rare cases, even cause death. Salmonellosis can be transmitted through consumption of contaminated food during production and/or handling. For more information please visit www.iso.org

Copyright Directive

The UK government will be bringing the Copyright Directive into law by December 2002. The most significant change will be that copying for commercial purposes for research will no longer be allowed under the new law. One of the difficulties is that librarians would have to distinguish between private research and research for commercial purposes. They would have to question their customers as to the nature of the copying and the ultimate use of the material. There is a possibility that librarians would have to treat all copying as though it was for commercial purposes and a risk of frustrated customers ripping out pages from books that they were not allowed to copy. These changes to the copyright law will mean that the commercial sector will become increasingly reliant on licensing schemes. The problem is that the existing licensing schemes do not cover many of the types of copying, which commercial organisations depend on. For example, there is no licensing scheme for copying from web sites. For more information please visit www.la-hq.org.uk

Standard of GP services

According to a recent study by the Audit Commission, it has been reported that General Practice services vary across the country, with inner city areas more likely to have fewer GPs and poorer facilities. The study also found that one in ten surgeries did not meet the basic minimum standards such as having a sink in the treatment room. It was also found that one in five Londoners have to wait three days or more to see their doctor, compared to one in eight in other parts of the country. There are also staffing problems, positions vacant in some areas are as high as one in five and in other areas, nearly half the doctors are close to retirement age. Although the report suggests that GP numbers are increasing, it is still not fast enough to meet the targets set out in the NHS plan that was published in July 2000. Back then there was the promise of 2,000 extra GPs by year 2004. With increasing the numbers of GPs working in partnership, offering more patient choice and higher-quality services, this would result in a higher concentration of services in fewer centres, therefore patients would have to travel further to see their GPs. The report however, concludes that plans to modernise the service should improve matters.

Memory boosting drugs

In a study organised by Stanford University in the US on airline pilots with average age of 50, found that by taking the Alzheimer's drug "Aricept", the pilots were able to retain complex training instructions better than those who were given a placebo. The drug is currently licensed in the UK for use in the treatment of patients who suffer from Alzheimer's and has shown to delay the progression of the disease. However, whether the drug would be suitable for wider use as a memory enhancer is still questionable, with some concerns about its side effects.

Internet misuse

According to a new survey, the majority of sackings for Internet misuse are due to employees downloading porn material from the Internet. In October 2000 employers were given the right to look at employees' movements on the Internet, or read their e-mail messages. More and more companies are installing filtering systems to keep an eye on their staff and crack down on those who waste company time by spending hours browsing the web or those who look at or download inappropriate material. Computer systems can also be used to make sure that employees do not defraud the company or sell its secrets to their competitors. The filters can also be used to check e-mail messages carrying viruses.

Aids vaccine

At the International Aids Conference in Barcelona, organised by the United Nations agency UNAids, it was reported that a new vaccine for Aids could be available by 2005. The vaccine has worked on chimpanzees and the results of trials on humans are due to be published next year. The biggest ever

HIV vaccine trial is due to begin later this year in Thailand. For the vaccine to be granted a licence, it would need to show the vaccine is effective in at least one-third of patients.

HRT linked to breast cancer

A major study in US into hormone replacement therapy (HRT) has been stopped by the US National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute Authorities after it showed the treatment increased the risks of breast cancer. The study, which was due to continue until 2005, found that women who took the combination of hormones, were almost 25% more likely to develop breast cancer. It also found that the hormones increased the risks of heart disease, stroke and blood clots. While HRT reduced cases of hip fractures and colon cancer, authorities ruled that the risks far outweighed the benefits and ordered researchers to stop.

ISO Standards for injury control and safety in children

ISO/IEC Guide 50, *Safety Aspects - Guidelines for child safety*, a new improved guide has been published by ISO (International Organization for Standardization) to provide standards writers with a framework to address the potential sources of hazards that children may be exposed to and how to assess children's interaction with products or environment in order to develop standards with a view to minimizing injury to children. The new edition has been updated to place more emphasis on hazards as the sources of injury present in products and the environment due to children being at a greater risk of injury than the rest of the population. Childhood and adolescent injuries are a major source of death and disability in many countries. According to the European Child Safety Alliance, approximately 100 children die every week due to an injury in the European Union alone. For more information please visit www.iso.org