



# Essential Elements of an Incident Narrative

Bruce Thomadsen

University of Wisconsin and

Center for the Assessment of Radiological Sciences

# The Narrative

- In an incident report, the narrative is the description of what happened.
- It is the story.
- The incident report has a lot of information, most is choices between limited selections.
- Those data are digital and searchable and provide valuable information.
- However, they cannot convey the story.



# The Narrative

- Most stories have a beginning, a middle and an end.
- Understand, though, that in life, there is always things that happen before the beginning of the story that affect the story.
- The narrative seldom has the end of the story.



# The Narrative: Requirements

- The narrative has to convey the story in a short synopsis so the reader understands.
- It is short more because the writer has little time to report rather than the system imposes length limits.



# What is the Narrative Again?

The narrative that one sees on a reporting system website is very different.

- RO-ILS:
  - First written by a reporter.
  - Finished as posted written after the analysis and can be thoughtfully written including the causes.
- NRC and CRCPD: written by the investigating regulator, colored by regulatory issues and what the facility wants to share.



# What is the Narrative Again-Cont.?

The narrative that one sees on a reporting system website is very different.

- ROSIS and SAFRON: written by the anonymous reporter.
- CARS: Has two – the initial narrative written by the facility right after discovery of an incident and the CARS's analyst's description of the incident.



# Purpose of the Narrative

- In some cases the narrative is the only description of the incident.
- In other cases, the incident is to inform those who will be doing the analysis.



# Purpose and Properties of the Narrative

- The purpose of the Narrative is to convey an understanding of the incident.
- The purpose of the very initial narrative is to prove information to start a causal analysis.
- To do this, the narrative must exhibit:
  - Brevity
  - Clarity
  - Organization





# Purpose and Properties of the Narrative

- To do this, the narrative must exhibit:
  - Brevity
  - Clarity
  - Organization
- It must capture the order of the actions.
- It must make the situation and actions understandable.



# Purpose and Properties of the Narrative

- The narrative should establish who did what when, but **avoid assigning blame or making confessions of guilt.**
- Narratives written before analysis should include contributory factors **but not state causality.**
- Hypotheses are welcome but not to be stated as fact.
- A narrative needs to avoid ambiguity and innuendo.



# Final Narrative

- At some point a final report appears in a database for study. (It may be the initial narrative or it may replace the initial narrative).
- This final narrative needs to have:
  - A well-ordered telling of what happened,
  - A discussion of the causes and contributing factors,
  - Identification of barriers that failed and barriers that worked,
  - A telling of what happened to those involved.



# The Report

- The report associated with the incident will describe steps taken to improve systemic weaknesses identified in the analysis.
- Depending on the structure of the reporting system, that may or may not be part of the narrative, but if it is, it should be a separate section.



# A Sample Narrative

On 5/20:

CT@10am

Sent draw QCL @ 12:40pm

Draw QCL completed at 5:30pm

Sent Orders QCL to verify and void multiple orders

Orders QCL completed at 5:36pm

Skip selected on contour round QCL

On 5/21

Picked up by dosimetry noticed that ordered LT Breast and Rt Breast cavity was drawn, label on contour was ROI

Send Draw QCL at 12:30pm to correct drawing

Draw QCL completed at 2:25

Also fix orders, fractionation number incorrect.

All orders had left breast.



# Another

A patient arrived in the clinic for a follow-up visit with a provider. While visiting the clinic, the patient was mistaken for another patient and inadvertently taken to the treatment room and a single fraction was delivered to the patient's whole brain.



# Three More

- Pt was not put in to see Dr. on under treatment day.
- A patient visiting the clinic for a follow-up visit was with a single fraction to the whole brain. The patient was mistaken for a different patient.
- Patient was schedule for Linac 2 but was accidentally planned for Linac 1.
- Sim techs did not fill out the sim sheet completely. Headrest and arm position was not listed on the sheet.



# The Good

During physics review of the composite plan printout, it was found that the boost plan used in the composite printout did not use the same total prescribed dose as shown in the separate boost plan printout. The separate boost plan matched the written directive, but the composite did not. The written directive required a boost of 8 fractions of 200 cGy/fxn, while the composite used a boost of 5 fractions of 200 cGy/fxn. It should be noted that the initial plan, boost plan, and composite plan are all calculated by the dosimetrist and reviewed by the physician prior to the start of treatment of the initial plan. The initial plan was reviewed by physics prior to start of the treatment. However, the boost and composite were not reviewed by the physicist until the week prior to start of the boost plan. So discovery of the error was delayed until after 21 fractions of the initial plan had been delivered.

I requested that the dosimetrist recompute the composite plan with the correct boost dose, ask the physician to review for approval, and then reprint the composite plan.





# Task Group 288

## Charge

Develop a consensus format structure for use in a radiation-oncology incident reporting system to guide initial reporters through recording relevant narrative information about incidents clearly and more uniformly than simple free text.



# Task Group 288

- The task group will see if there is a way to guide the reporter to organize the useful information into the narrative
  - Maybe by some headings?
  - Maybe some questions?
- A balance is needed: too little formatting allows chaos; too little inhibits free thought.
- The TG is just starting its work.



# Summary on Narratives

- The report narrative needs to:
  - Convey the sense of an incident clearly, and
  - Provide the information necessary to assist in an analysis.
- The narrative should not jump to conclusions.
- TG 288 will try to develop guide for drafting narratives.

