

The problem with the '5 whys.'

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Card AJ. The problem with '5 whys'. BMJ Qual Saf. 2017;26(8):671-677. doi:10.1136/bmjqs-2016-005849.

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/problem-5-whys>

[Investigation](#) of incidents in complex systems can be hindered by time limitations, lack of follow-up, and incomplete resolution. This commentary discusses a commonly used tool to identify root causes of problems. The author highlights its value as a teaching tool but notes that its use for [root cause analysis](#) in health care may be misguided as it tends to simplify complex problems and limit understanding of how processes fail.