

Welcome to our Fall 2005 Newsletter. Fall brings to mind visions of rust colored leaves, pumpkins and...Six Sigma? Yes! However, unlike leaves falling off a tree, quality should never fade or wither. Striving for continual quality improvement is one of the tenets of Six Sigma.



## DIA

The Drug Information Association is holding the **Computerized Systems for Nonclinical Safety Assessment** conference March 22 – 24, 2006 at their corporate offices in Horsham, PA. Look for CSI at this meeting as we will be participating on the committee to update the DIA's reference guide for Computerized Systems as they relate to non-clinical laboratories.

## Six Sigma

Six Sigma is a concept often used in office conversation. But there are a lot of misconceptions about this frequently used term. It originates with the Greek letter sigma ( $\sigma$ ), which is used to represent a Standard Deviation calculation of a data set. When looking at classroom grades or city temperatures, plus/minus one or two standard deviations may provide a reasonable margin of error. However, the driver behind Six Sigma is that if you can eliminate manufacturing /transactional/product/service errors within plus/minus six standard deviations (Six Sigma), the significant costs associated with those errors will also be eliminated. Indeed, this seems sensible, as Six Sigma allows less than 3.4 errors per million opportunities.

Six Sigma is a measurement-based approach focusing on the reduction of variation. This methodology consists of 5 steps: Define, Measure, Aalyze, Design and Verify.

Define – Set project goals as they relate to customer deliverables.

Measure – Determine measurable customer needs and specifications.

Aalyze – Review process options that meet the customer needs.

Design – Set up the process that meets customer needs.

Verify – Ensure the new process meets performance goals as they relate to the ability to meet customer requirements.

Business leaders must determine what makes sense for their organization. It is important to remember that the focus is on improving and sustaining the gains – not which method is used to achieve those gains. Whether you use Six Sigma or any other methodology, improvement efforts can only be successful if a systematic approach is applied.

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