Sioux Valley Visiting Nurses Association (VNA), a South Dakota agency with branch sites in Minnesota and South Dakota, successfully improved the target outcome of *Improvement in Status of Surgical Wounds*. The plan of action for remediation began in June 2003. The *All Patients’ Descriptive Outcome Report* for January 2004 showed that 26.7% of VNA patients had improvement in status of surgical wounds compared to an adjusted prior rate of 10.5% for December 2003. This improvement of 16.2% over a twelve month time period is statistically significant.

Sioux Valley VNA’s OBQI team consists of the administrator, regional manager, clinical nurse specialist, coding specialist, site coordinator and performance improvement coordinator. The OBQI Team developed a second team called the Care Behaviors Team Audit Group that meets every month. The Care Behaviors Team Audit Group audits charts for specific best practices that have been implemented from the plans of action. They also incorporate the care behavior audit criteria into their routine audits that are performed to meet regulatory guidelines. Information resulting from the audits is shared with all clinical staff, from all branch sites, on a monthly basis through meetings, inservices and the development of an internal OBQI newsletter.

“Developing and implementing specific tools for clinical staff to utilize that will result in consistent surgical wound assessments and patient interventions was essential to improving patient care and outcomes,” SD VNA Quality Improvement Coordinator, Elizabeth Twamley explained. “Best practices were identified, revised and additions made throughout the implementation of our plan.” A few of the inservices and best practices implemented were:

- How to correctly answer MO440, MO482, MO484 and MO488.
- Monthly audits and review of results and methods to improve.
- Regular monthly education that includes nursing and therapy staff.
- Surgical wounds assessed and documented utilizing the WOCN guidelines.
- Wound measurements done on admit, discharge and, at minimum, one time per week. Measurements will include length, width and depth. ‘0’ will be utilized for ‘no depth’ when no wound bed is present.
- Each wound assessment includes type, location, description of wound bed, surrounding tissue, drainage and current wound care treatment.
- Nutrition assessment completed on admit and nutrition education included for all patients with surgical wound.
- The 485 form and each wound assessment includes current wound treatment.

VNA staff found that one of the most important findings throughout the OBQI implementation process was recognizing the importance of providing monthly care behavior audits and sharing information or providing education on a monthly basis. According to Twamley, “With the cooperation of our staff, administration and State QIO, Sioux Valley VNA was able to successfully understand and implement the OBQI process.”