
Editorials:
Patient Satisfaction as an Important Indicator for Measuring Quality in Health Care

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Each patient is unique, with his own needs, strengths, values, and beliefs. Family practice centers work to establish trust and open communication with patients and to understand and protect each patient's cultural, psychosocial, and spiritual values. Patient care outcomes can be improved when patients and, as appropriate, their families and/or those who make decisions on their behalf are well informed and involved in care decisions and processes in a way that matches their cultural expectations.¹ Patient satisfaction is the extent to which patients are happy with their healthcare, both inside and outside of the doctor's office. A measure of care quality, patient satisfaction gives providers insights into various aspects of medicine; including the effectiveness of their care and their level of empathy¹.

Patient satisfaction measuring methods assess patients' views over a wide range of specific issues. Therefore, satisfaction will be influenced by many specific issues including:

- How access the practice is?
- How polite and helpful the receptionist is?
- How effectively the practice appears to be organized?
- How nice the practice premises are?

- How long after the designated appointment time the patient waits to be seen?
- The amount of time spent in consultation; how receptive, sympathetic and effective the doctor or nurse appear.
- Whether the effectiveness of the consultation is improved with written information or leaflets and the outcome of the consultation leads to the patient feeling better.²

Patient satisfaction can be assessed either anecdotally (general perception of patients' attitudes, gifts, complaints) or systematically using questionnaires. Assessment of patient satisfaction by questionnaires is being given increasing importance. Although the validity of questionnaires can be questioned, i.e. whether they are truly representative or if they are affected by the well-being of the patient who completes it, they can be used to identify key areas of the practice that are working well, and those that are working not so well. They can therefore be a useful tool in evaluating the services provided for patients, and provide a direction for future change and development.

Patient surveys require a lot of effort from the whole practice team. Therefore involvement and getting the enthusiastic support of the team is very important. In a cross-sectional study performed on 13,360 participants, 2015, waiting time (for every 10 min) was inversely associated with patient satisfaction. Consultation time (for every 10 min) was directly associated with patient satisfaction. This should be taken into consideration when designing interventions to improve waiting times and consultation times in ambulatory care facilities from Peru or from similar contexts.³

To promote patient satisfaction, the family practice center begins by defining patient's rights and educating patients, family members, and staff about those rights. Patients need to be well informed and know how to act on their rights. Health care practitioners are taught to understand and respect patients' beliefs and values and to provide considerate and respectful care that promotes and protects patients' dignity and self-worth.

As stated by Joint commission international (JCI) primary care standards, patient satisfaction survey should be conducted periodically. The survey may cover their opinion on the easiness of getting care, waiting time, health care providers, payment,

facility safety and confidentiality of their information. The JCI and Egyptian General Authority for Healthcare Accreditation and Regulation (GAHAR) emphasize that leader of family practice center should participate in the center-wide effort to improve patient satisfaction.

Thus, patient satisfaction is an important and commonly used indicator for measuring the quality in health care. It affects clinical outcomes, patient retention, and medical malpractice claims and affects the timely, efficient, and patient-centered delivery of quality health care.

References:

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