

A STUDY OF PATIENT SATISFACTION LEVEL IN OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENT OF TERTIARY HOSPITAL

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ABSTRACT

Background: Consumer satisfaction regarding medical care organization like tertiary care hospital is important in the provision of services to patients. Although there is a wide variation in efforts to provide quality care, the aim of all healthcare institutions including private hospitals, public hospitals and University based hospitals in worldwide is to achieve the highest possible quality of care. **Aims** This study aimed to find out the level of patient satisfaction related to different parameters of quality of health care among the outpatient departments. **Methodology:** It was a hospital based cross-sectional survey which was done on seventy patients/caregivers availing OPD services in 14 clinical department at a tertiary hospital. Participants were interviewed using a structured validated questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data. Frequency analysis was done to check the level of patient satisfaction. **Result:** The overall satisfaction was rated as average to good by 40% of the participants. Patient feedback regarding doctors service was rated as average. Regarding the quality of services provided by the nurses and ward boys, 50% of the participant rated it as average. 50% of the participants gave average score to coordination among healthcare team towards smooth management of the patient. Behavior of the of the reception staff was rated good by only 38% of the participants. Regarding general services and facilities in the hospital like ease to find the hospital and parking was reported satisfactory by 55.7% of the participants. **Conclusion:** There were several factors contributing towards below average scoring in hospital services. Although the perception and judgement of quality are highly individualistic and dynamic, this percentage scores can be used as a feedback of the quality services which can be considered as parameter to improvise the service of any tertiary care hospital.

KEYWORDS: Hospital services, Patient satisfaction, patient feedback.

INTRODUCTION

A patient's expression of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a judgment on the quality of hospital care in all of its aspects. Although there is a wide variation in efforts to provide quality care, the aim of all healthcare institutions including private hospitals, public hospitals and University based hospitals in worldwide is to achieve the highest possible quality of care.^[1] The scope of health services varies widely from country to country and influenced by general and ever changing national, state and local health problems, needs and attitudes as well as the available resources to provide these services. The importance of quality in the healthcare sector has been recognized, but it has been accelerated over the last decade through the development of quality insurance, quality improvement programs and patients' agenda.

The Out Patient Department (OPD) Services is one of the most important aspects of Hospital Administration. There are several problems faced by patients in the outpatient department, such as overcrowding, delay in treatment, lack of proper direction, etc., leading to frustration of the patient. Survey is one of the best ways to find out patient satisfaction with the service and what steps might be taken to avoid disappointment with the customer. Patients carry certain expectations before their visit and the resultant satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the outcome of their actual experience. Patient's satisfaction depends upon many factors such as (i) Quality of clinical services provided (ii) Availability of medicines (iii) Behaviors of doctors and other health staff (iv) Cost of services (v) Hospital infrastructure (vi) Physical and emotional comfort.^[2] Patient satisfaction affects clinical

outcomes, patient retention, and medical malpractice claims. Patient satisfaction is thus a proxy but a very effective indicator to measure the success of doctors and hospitals. Mismatch between patient's expectation of the service received is related to decreased satisfaction. Therefore assessing patient perspective gives them a voice, which can make public health services more responsive to people's needs & expectations. Patient satisfaction data can also be used to document health care quality to accrediting organizations and consumer groups and can provide leverage in negotiating contracts.^[3] Patient's feedback is necessary to identify problems that need to be resolved in impending the health service. Even if they still do not use this information systematically to improve care delivery and services, this type of feedback triggers a real interest that can lead to a change in their culture and their perception of patients. Satisfied patients are more likely to comply with treatment, keep follow up appointment and utilize health services. Such behavioral consequences related to satisfaction could affect outcome of care and health seeking behavior. Probably the most important reason to conduct patient satisfaction surveys is that they provide the ability to identify and resolve potential problems before they become serious. They can also be used to assess and measure specific initiatives or changes in service delivery. Most importantly, they can increase patient loyalty by demonstrating you care about their perceptions and are looking for ways to improve Consumer satisfaction regarding medical care organization like our tertiary care hospital is important in the provision of services to patients. This study was therefore undertaken with the aim to find out the level of patient satisfaction related to different parameters of quality of health care among the outpatient departments and to identify the key factors that affect patient satisfaction regarding health care services.

METHODOLOGY

This was the hospital based cross-sectional study which was done on patients/caregivers availing OPD services at a private medical college hospital All the patients who received OPD services and gave consent to participate were included in the study. Subjects who refuse to participate, those who were employee at the selected hospital and subjects with communication barrier were excluded from the study. Subjects were selected through Random sampling method Self prepared validated questionnaire was used to check the satisfaction level among 70 patients/caregivers. Each perspective of satisfaction was measured on likert scale with 0 scored as poor and 5 scored as excellent. The questions included feedback regarding registration process, seating arrangements, cleanliness, approach to the doctor, pharmacist and investigation site, services provided by the doctor and other Paramedical staff & their behavior with patients, time required for locating the consultant, consults by the doctor, investigations, taking medicines from pharmacist etc.

Procedure

After taking ethical clearance from institute ethical committee the questionnaire was developed to check the different aspect of patient's satisfaction. The clinical outpatient departments were selected. Once the patient had availed the service in particular department, appropriate explanation regarding the purpose of questionnaire (in the language they can understand) was given. Written Informed consent was obtained from patient/caregivers. Twenty patients/relatives of each outpatient department who seeked the service were interviewed randomly using the validated questionnaire by the three Public relation officers. The patients were also told that the investigator was not part of treatment team and they were free to give their responses. The entire filled questionnaire was collected from each department everyday at the end of the working day. The information obtained was entered in the SPSS for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Date was analyzed using SPSS version 20 software. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data. Frequency analysis was done to check the level of patient satisfaction.

RESULTS

The present study aimed to check the level of satisfaction of patients in a tertiary hospital. Eighty eight patients/relatives were interviewed using developed and validated questionnaire. 18 feedback forms were excluded from the analysis due to incomplete response by the respondents during interview. Total 70 response forms were analyzed. The departments included in the study were outpatient department of 14 clinical areas- Neurosurgery, dermatology, ophthalmology, ENT, Medicine, Dental, Orthopaedics, surgery, Physiotherapy, Psychiatric, Paediatrics, Obstetric and Gynaecology, Urology and Chest and pulmonary disease. Five patients/relatives were interviewed from each of the 14 departments included in the study.

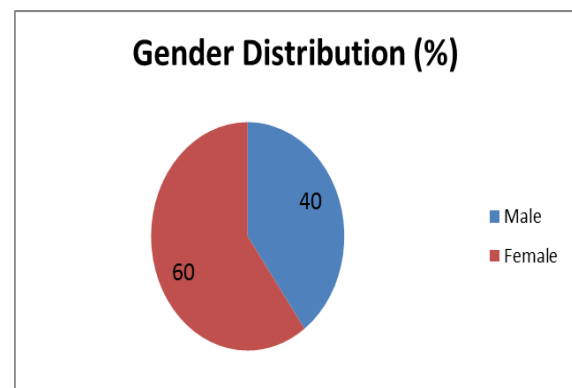


Fig 1: Showing gender distribution of the participants.

The mean age of the participants was 36.8 years with standard deviation of 20.2 years. Sixty percent of the

participants were females (fig 1). The literacy rate of patient/caregiver showed that only 40% were literate or educated up to primary level. Overall satisfaction of the patients for the availability and quality of services in the hospital was rated as good, which could be attributed to availability of free medicines and low cost of laboratory tests.

Patient feedback regarding doctors service was rated as average. Attention given by the doctors on patient complains and illness issues were reported as satisfactory and adequate by 41% of the participants. Fourty percent of the participants reported that doctors showed willingness to listen to their problem and rated as average on the satisfaction score. Thirty percent of the participants reported that they were explained adequately regarding the treatment options available for their illness and they rated it good on satisfaction score. Thirty four percent of the participants were satisfied with the time given to them by doctors during all the treatment and assessment process.

Regarding the quality of services provided by the nurses and wardboys, 50% of the participant rated it as average, however 24% rated the quality of service by them as poor. 44% of the participants were satisfied with the politeness and patience they showed towards their problem.

Regarding the coordination among healthcare team towards smooth management of the patient, 50% of the participants rated it as average on satisfaction score. 38% of the participants reported that behavior of the of the reception staff were good and they were helpful. Participants also reported that helpdesk team were cooperative enough in giving appropriate and correct information.

The average time taken for laboratory investigation report was 4-6 hours which was rated as satisfactory by 30% of the participants. This increased in average duration could be due to some of the time taking test report such as RTPCR which is done commonly during present COVID pandemic.

Regarding general services and facilities in the hospital, ease to find the hospital and parking was reported satisfactory by 55.7% of the participants. It was easy to find ways to the hospital and other services in the hospital due to appropriate signage boards placed adequately at various location in the city as well as in the hospital. The cleanliness was reported as average by 47% of the participants in the washrooms and hospital premises.

The pharmacy services in the hospital was rated as average by 47% of the participants. And availability of drugs was found satisfactory.

DISCUSSION

The overall satisfaction of the participants was rated as average to good in terms of services provided by the doctors, nursing staff and other supporting staff. Thirty seven percent of the participants reported that doctors showed willingness to listen to their problems which has build more confidence on them. The relationship between the concepts of confidence and trust has previously been explored, with a distinction between the two concepts being suggested, based on an individual's perception of the situation. Luhmann suggests that familiarity (e.g. between doctor and patient) may be an important determinant of whether the relationship is characterized by trust or confidence. Developing these ideas, some researchers have suggested that patients' trust in healthcare practitioners may relate to interpersonal familiarity and that patients' trust in healthcare systems is often greatest where systems are long established and known to the individual patient. In situations characterized by lack of familiarity, patients may simply have to exercise faith in an individual practitioner or in the healthcare system. Previous research has highlighted the associations between patients' trust and several interpersonal aspects of the doctor-patient relationship within the consultation. This includes the importance to patients of effective communication, a sense of partnership between doctor and patient and the patient's perception of being given enough time during the consultation. Thus patient satisfaction can't be linked directly with this.^[16]

Information given to the patient regarding their illness/disease was rated as average by 45.7 of the participant. This was satisfactory in about 91% of patients in the study by krupal joshi et al; and was 81.6% in a study of Acharya & Acharya. The findings of the study by Hassan Soleimanpour et al on emergency department patient satisfaction survey in Imam Reza Hospital, Tabriz, Iran revealed that the satisfaction level of patients in regard to the information given by care provider about medication was very good in 49.4% of patients. The average rating in our study could be due to low literacy level of the patients in our study, also language barriers contributed somewhat to these limitations, but even when patients could understand the language of their medical instructions, many could not comprehend the medical information due to low literacy level, and these beliefs are also contributors to (non) adherence. In a study of asthmatic patients who were given extensive, high-quality information on the use of daily inhaled corticosteroids, only 38% adhered to their medication regimen, whereas the other 62% continued to mistakenly believe that their medication should only be taken when they were symptomatic. In practice, patients' low health literacy has been linked to ineffective physician-patient communication.

The information given to patient regarding treatment for their illness and options available for the treatment was rated average by 34% patients and 28% rated it very

good. It is known that Physician–patient partnerships are essential when choosing amongst various therapeutic options to maximize adherence. Successful communication between physicians and patients promotes greater patient satisfaction with medical care, which in turn fosters higher levels of adherence. When the doctors explain the patient regarding treatment options and allow the patient to choose, the reciprocity and mutuality between patients and their physicians becomes better which is termed as concordance and is key to greater patient involvement in decision making. When health professional–patient relationships are concordant, patients understand the costs and benefits of their recommended regimens, and through a process of negotiation with their physicians they arrive at a better understanding of treatment. When physicians and patients work together and strive for mutual agreement, they both achieve higher levels of satisfaction with the treatment encounter. This reciprocal exchange of information is vital to the decision making process that actively involves the patient. Patients tend to be more satisfied with such exchanges and take more responsibility for and adhere better to treatment choices that are made jointly.

In our study we also took feedback about nursing services which too plays a very important role in patient satisfaction. Nurses' greatest power in improving the patient experience lay in their ability to effectively and empathically communicate with patients. Nurses, who of all clinicians spend the most time with patients, are key to delivering quality. Literature says that Nurses who get to know their patients on a personal level are more successful at improving patient satisfaction. The nurses have a central role in offering emotional and psychological support to patients and their families in all settings, such as supporting the patient through diagnosis and ensuring optimum care given to them. Besides the provision of technical care, nurses must have the qualified professional knowledge, attitudes and skills, providing the informational, emotional and practical supports. The allocation of sufficient time for talking and listening to patients and providing information is a prerequisite for patient satisfaction, as it ensures that patients are less stressed and more engaged and well adjusted. A study indicated that patients were more satisfied with having respectful communication whereas they were less satisfied with the professional information provided by the nurses about their disease, health status, investigations and prognosis of their condition. In a meta-analysis conducted by Özsoy et al. patients expected favour, attention, understanding, kindness and helpfulness from individuals providing care services. Information provision and education are important factors affecting patient satisfaction. It is known that receipt of adequate information affects patients' confidence and satisfaction and this is the most important factor in encouraging patients to participate in their own health care. In addition, providing patients and their families with information about patients' conditions is

important in helping them overcome fear of the unknown. In our study Patients reported that information played an important role in their satisfaction and they emphasized that information provided by nurses should be clear and concise. In our study 44% of the participants rated the human qualities of nurses as average. The reason for Patients having low levels of satisfaction with information and instructions given by nurses could be due to the fact that nurses had the perception that "information giving" was the role of the physicians and the nurses may be fearful to provide information because of the power hierarchy between the nurses and the physicians.

The mean age of the participants in our study was 36.7 years which depicts that contribution was more of younger population. Older respondents are usually more satisfied, probably because they were more social and accepting than younger or they had more respect and care for providers. Another possible reasons can be that levels of satisfaction could differ according to cultural values or the patients did not held positive attitudes towards events, based on age-related increases in tolerance and maturity levels.

Apart from medical and nursing care other support facilities provided by the hospital like front office, also play a major role in customer satisfaction. Many activities are being processed through front office like discharge, registration, billing, report collection, enquiry and counseling. Patient can be highly dissatisfied by these services even though they are satisfied with actual medical care. In our study 38% of the participants graded the reception staff behavior as satisfactory. According to them majority of the front office staff were courteous and polite. The remaining respondents who rated the staff as average or below average (needs improvement) think that there is a scope of improvement in professional efficiency of staff.

In terms of general services, it was also found to be good as per stated responses. Although, majority of the respondents agreed that other facilities like food, mobile charging points are good but required in more numbers in order to cater high volume during peak hours.

Physical facilities measure the patient's perception about the quality of service in regard to the hospital's physical services. This measure includes: The cleanliness and maintenance of the facility. Forming a pleasant environment that strongly facilitates the patients to make a full recovery. It is very important that the appropriate healthcare staff must work to improve the physical environment of the hospital, such environment will immensely be helpful for the patients to recovery on time and enjoy a healthy life. The cleanliness of the hospital toilets is also considered to be one of the most important issue for the public and from the study it was assessed that 57% of the study population agreed with the fact that the clean environment was effectively maintained in the

hospital area and different outpatient departments. The cleanliness of the environment is often the first thing a patient notices when entering a hospital. That first impression may then serve as the foundation of the patient experience, which today is a recognized aspect of health care. It is abundantly clear that a clean environment is critical to a positive patient experience. Cleanliness is being considered by patients at every point in their health care journey. The appearance of the physical environment is vital to a patient's perception and customer satisfaction is based on perception.

Efficient laboratory services, that deliver services within a timely fashion, is essential from a medical viewpoint, as well as its impact on patient satisfaction. In laboratory services, particularly the waiting time was the main issue and patients' comfort during lab tests and x-ray may be improved for improving satisfaction of clients.

The development of new and innovative technological methods and the increased need for specialized healthcare services have brought about a distinct transformation in pharmacy services. In 2011, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) jointly recommended good pharmacy practice guidelines. Consequently, pharmacists have been increasingly involved in marketing their services with a focus on patient satisfaction. Furthermore, pharmacists have been persuaded to become mutually accountable for healthcare consequences and the enhancement of the patient's quality of life. Pharmacy staff are usually less qualified, a general lack of professionalism, a lack of knowledge regarding the rules and responsibilities of pharmacists and the execution of their duties are the key factors which impacted negatively on the quality of pharmacy services offered by public hospitals. These issues negatively impact on patient satisfaction. The information that pharmacists provide to patients is insufficient, which leads to a deficient interaction between the dispenser and the patient.^[68] It is for this reason that patients are highly concerned with finding a good private pharmacy service, rather than using a pharmacy service provided by public hospitals. The availability of pharmacy service and satisfied patients are essential to increase the quality of pharmacy service provided. Pharmacist involvement in patient care through pharmacy services increased the level of patient's satisfaction with all the aspects related to a pharmacist and provided care. Being an important member of the health-care team, it is the prime responsibility of the pharmacist to provide good services to patients. The patient-pharmacist relation has immense importance in improving patient health. Patients who are satisfied with pharmacy services are more likely to take their medications appropriately and less likely to change from one health care to another. Even though most hospital pharmacy professionals are engaged in the traditional dispensing of drugs and management of drug inventory, this traditional practice affects patient satisfaction and

the potential role of pharmacists in improving the patients' health.

In the present study 31% of the participants rated the service as average saying drugs are expensive. This can be directly related to payment status. Respondents who were covered their health cost through ayushman Bharat scheme were more satisfied when compared with who paid out of pocket and respondents who were covered their health cost through insurance/free fee paid more satisfied than who were paid out of pocket. Regarding facility-related factors; the number of drugs dispensed, medication availability, comfortability of waiting areas were associated with satisfaction. Patients who did not access even a single medication from the hospital pharmacy were less likely to be satisfied than those who did access medication from the hospital pharmacy. Our finding suggests medication availability is a core service that patients interestingly find to be satisfied more.

SUMMARY

This study was aimed to assess the level of satisfaction over different components of services at tertiary hospital and identify the key factors that affect patient satisfaction regarding health care services. The overall satisfaction was rated as average to good by forty percent of the participants. There were many factors contributing towards greater percentage of participants grading services below average. However it provides the feedback of the quality of services which can be considered as parameter to improvise the service of any tertiary care hospital.

Implication of the study

This study will help in knowing the area where our services needs improvement. Based on identified area administration can work on the loopholes to improve the hospital services thereby increasing the patient satisfaction. We has few limitation in the study such as small sample size and some of the department like radiology, blood bank etc were not assessed which also forms the major area of a hospital. However, Future study can be carried out in a larger sample size considering the missed department in the sample too.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study confirm that perception and judgement of quality are highly individualistic, dynamic and consequently client satisfaction has an important reflection on the quality of health care process. The patient satisfaction can be considered as a feedback tool to improve the quality of services in hospital.

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