

PATIENTS' SATISFACTION AND QUALITY OF SERVICES AT THE LABORATORY SERVICE CENTRE IN A TEACHING HOSPITAL, SOUTHEAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Laboratory quality test result starts at the point of sample collection. The laboratory collection centre is a place for collection of blood, urine, stool, sputum and any other body fluid samples for laboratory analysis. It is the first port of call for every patient that comes in for laboratory assay in any hospital. Hence the need for quality assurance of this centre for efficient, effective and quality results for patients care. The aim of the study is to evaluate Patients' satisfaction of the services offered at the laboratory collection point of a Teaching Hospital in the southeast Nigeria. A pre-tested and semi-structured questionnaire was used to assess 1000 patients and/ or relatives that access services at the laboratory collection centre. Data was analyzed using the STATA statistical package version 13.0SE. Out of the 1000 patients interviewed, 620(62.0%) were females and 380(38.0%) were males. The mean waiting time was 22.3±8.6minutes though 55.8% of the patients waited for >15minutes while 44.2% waited within 15minutes. The overall patients' satisfaction and quality of services were rated high.

KEYWORDS: Patients' satisfaction, laboratory collection centre, Teaching hospital.

INTRODUCTION

Patients' satisfaction is a highly desirable outcome of clinical care in the hospital (Toreson, 2005). Satisfactory evaluation is widely used in healthcare systems to improve the quality of health service in order to obtain better health care outcome (Meng et al., 2018). Patients' satisfaction means the overall evaluation of the entire health care service process, which can be employed as a key indicator for evaluation of health care service quality (Naidu, 2009). The striving to please patients is in harmony with the service of laboratory medicine and is in direct agreement with the Hippocratic Oath. Analyzing patient's satisfaction by using feedback results can provide health care workers with sufficient understanding of factors and areas that require

improvement. (Wang et al, 2013). A patient's satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a judgment on the quality of care rendered at the collection centre. Turnaround time (TAT) is one of the most noticeable signs of laboratory service and is often used as a key performance indicator of laboratory performance (Hawkins, 2007).

The laboratory collection centre is a place for collection of blood, urine, stool, sputum and any other body fluids for laboratory analysis. It is the first port of call for patients with laboratory assay. Analyzing patients' satisfaction at this point will reveal the quality of service, efficient, effective and quality results that will be generated for patients care. Waiting time has been shown to be an important part of satisfaction from previous

studies, (Abolfotouh *et al.*, 2017). Attitude of staff plays a big role in service delivery and studies have shown a strong relationship between employee attitudes, morale and workplace productivity (Browne, 2018).

Healthy interaction between the collection centre staff and the patient is extremely important. Tension between the laboratory staff and patient may lead to insufficient mutual communication and poor understanding, (Meng *et al.*, 2018). Sociocultural values and attitudes between countries differ, hence the need to conduct a study on patient satisfaction on the quality of services rendered at laboratory collection centre (the pre-analytical stage in quality control) in a University Teaching Hospital, Southeast Nigeria.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A total of 1000 patients/relation participated on this research within 6months (January to June). Data was

Table 1: Sociodemographic parameters.

<i>Age category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
40 and below	406	40.6
Above 40	594	59.4
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	620	62.0
Male	380	38.0

Table 2: Responses to assessment of the general condition of the Laboratory.

<i>How comfortable is the waiting area of the laboratory?</i>	Frequency	Percentage
Comfortable	274	27.4
Fair	265	26.5
Uncomfortable	262	26.2
Very uncomfortable	199	19.9
<i>How long did you wait before your sample was collected?</i>		
Within 15 mins	442	44.2
Above 15 mins	558	55.8
<i>Did you consider yourself delayed at the sample collection center?</i>		
No	431	43.1
Yes	569	56.9
<i>Were all the investigations prescribed by the doctors in this hospital?</i>		
No	13	1.3
Yes	987	98.7
<i>How do you rate the quality of services rendered at the laboratory?</i>		
Excellent	181	18.1
Very good	231	23.1
Good	386	38.6
Poor	202	20.2
<i>Overall, are you satisfied with the services rendered at the laboratory?</i>		
No	270	27.0
Yes	730	73.0
<i>Can you recommend the laboratory services to others?</i>		
No	214	21.4
Yes	786	78.6

collected using a pre-tested semi structured questionnaire administered to the patients and/or their relatives for some variables. The questionnaire dwelt with the demographic information and on the perception of the patients/relation about the general condition of the collection centre, the waiting time, the quality of services, attitude of staff and general satisfaction rate with the services rendered at the collection centre. The researchers help the patients who could not fill up the questionnaires. The data collated was analyzed using STATA statistical package version 13.0 SE with significance level set at a 95% confidence interval.

RESULTS

The tables below were the findings from the data collected.

Table 3: Responses to assess the attitude of the laboratory staff.

<i>How will you describe the attitude of the laboratory staff?</i>		
Very Friendly	32	3.2
Friendly	823	82.3
Unfriendly	74	7.4
Rude	61	6.1
Very rude	10	1.0

DISCUSSION

Patients` satisfaction of the services offered at the laboratory collection point, contributes to the psychological recovery aspect in the patient`s health. The environment, the comfortable waiting area, the waiting time for their samples to be collected, the attitude of the staff attending to them and the quality of the services rendered to them encourages their fast recovery from their illness.

The study on patient satisfaction on the quality of services rendered at laboratory collection centre in a University Teaching Hospital, Southeast Nigeria, showed that 27.4% of the patients agreed that the environment and the waiting areas were comfortable, while the remaining 72.6% were not comfortable in the place provided for them to wait for their samples to be collected. The mean waiting time for the patients to be attended to was 22.3+8.6minutes and a large proportion of the patients felt delayed. The delay was noted to be due the some factors like sorting the patient request form, arranging and labeling the required blood collection bottles for proper identification of the patient sample. The Attitude of staff was rated as very friendly by minority of the respondents while majority rated the staff attitude as friendly. A high number of patients were satisfied with the services rendered and assured the recommendation of the facility to other people. Irrespective of the fact that some patients were not satisfied with the services, they went ahead to report that they will still recommend the hospital to other members of the populace. This may be attributed to the fact that the hospital is a referral centre and has the most qualified professionals in the area.

CONCLUSION

The overall satisfaction of the patients was high, but the environment, waiting area, waiting time and the attitude of staff to the patients should be addressed to improve the quality of laboratory services rendered to patients seeking medical care.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

There is no existing conflict of interests.

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