

Quality Health Care Versus Patient Satisfaction: A Perspective

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Abstract

Quality health care is care that is needed and delivered in a manner that is competent, caring, cost-effective and timely. Patient satisfaction is a measure of the extent to which a patient is content with the health care which he received. The patient, the Physician and the Administrator, all have different perspectives of quality health care. The concept of patient satisfaction is expeditiously converting to customer's delight wherein the patient not only is cured of his ailments during the hospital stay but also is pleased with the amenities provided to him by the hospital and its staff during the stay which he fondly remembers after being discharged and longs to avail the services on some other occasion. The reputation of any health care facility is the dominant factor in determining patient's preferences which in turn depends on their perceptions of the institution. A well ventilated, well lit room, noise free room which offers him privacy and a clean, safe and secure environment, clean linen, healthy and tasty dietary services are some of the patient's expectations and unsaid demands which if met, improves the patient satisfaction significantly.

Keywords: Quality Health Care; Patient Satisfaction; Clientele Satisfaction

Introduction

Quality health care is care that is needed and delivered in a manner that is competent, caring, cost-effective and timely with minimum risk and achieves desirable benefits. Patient satisfaction is a measure of the extent to which a patient is content with the health care which he received from the health care provider. Both clinical quality health care and patient satisfaction or in better words perceived quality health care are two sides of the same coin which help the ailing patient get and feel better. Quality care addresses accessibility, relevance to need, equity, social requirements at the lowest cost whereas patient satisfaction is associated with his perception of the quality of care during the process of health care delivery. This article brings out the definition, importance, characteristics, comparison and different perceptions of quality health care and patient satisfaction.

Aim

To analyze and compare the characteristics of quality health care and patient satisfaction and study the correlation between the two.

Materials and Methods

All in-patients who were discharged after their treatment were included in the study. A total of 120 patients who were discharged from a border static hospital in the month of March 2022 were included in the study. Interaction with all the patients during the time of discharge in the form of exit interviews was done and their valuable feedback and suggestions were obtained.

Quality measures that were considered included process measures, outcome measures, and structure measures. Level of patient satisfaction was measured by self-assessment, interviewing

hospital staff and patients and exit interviews or feedback questionnaires provided to the patients while being discharged from the hospital.

Discussion

The patient, the Physician and the Administrator, all have different perspectives of quality health care. The patient feels that quality care is getting care when and where he requires it by whoever he chooses to cure his symptoms in the fastest possible way. The Physician perceives quality health care as the timely and best possible care available whilst the Administrator feels that provision of effective care in a cost conscious environment with optimum utilization of resources is quality health care. The Physician practices tough love and thinks that a hospital is not a hotel and patients should not expect to be pampered [1]. An Administrator emulates flight attendants and provides business class comfort to the patient and feels that we should learn from the hospitality industry and treat patients like guests at a four-star hotel [1].

Quality health care is effective, evidence-based and neither underused nor overused [2]. Professional quality means whether the nursing care meets the customer's need as defined by professionals and whether the professional procedures and standards, believed to produce the required outcomes are observed. The factors affecting provision of quality health care include resources in the form of equipment, infrastructure and consumables, trained, skilled and motivated manpower; a good hospital information system, good medical record keeping, strict supervision of medical and nursing care being offered, well written standard operating procedures and crystal clear guidelines for health care providers and well informed and reasonable patients and their attendants. Patients may find it difficult to evaluate the quality of care because they lack the Physician's medical expertise and training [3].

Clientele satisfaction and clinical outcome may not be interrelated. Giving patients what they exactly want will score satisfaction points but may be costly to the system and detrimental to the individual and public health [1]. Advise an MRI which was recommended by the patient's brother-in-law who practices medicine in the UAE or prescribe antibiotics which the patient just browsed on the internet and watch the patient satisfaction reaching new heights.

The concept of patient satisfaction is expeditiously converting to customer's delight wherein the patient not only is cured of his ailments during the hospital stay but also is pleased with the amenities provided to him by the hospital and its staff during the stay which he fondly remembers after being discharged and longs to avail the services on some other occasion. When the patients are dissatisfied, their real message is that their emotional needs are not being met and they feel disrespected, confined, vulnerable, fearful and lonely [1]. They expect the healthcare provider to treat these emotional needs too and to improve the clinical outcome, the Physician needs to address these issues [1].

Hence it is not only the clinical quality of health care which is important for the patient to be cured but also the perceived quality of health care which determines the patient satisfaction at large and in a significant way impacts clinical outcome. Patient satisfaction depends on 'Expectations' which the patient anticipated before being inside the hospital and 'Perceptions' which the health care facility made him feel after coming out of the hospital. The factors which influence patient satisfaction are appropriateness, availability, continuity, effectiveness, efficacy, efficiency of the health care provided to the patient on time with sensitivity and respect for his needs in a safe and secure environment respecting his sentiments and privacy.

The physician

There is a significant relationship between length of time devoted by the Physician for visiting the patient and the satisfaction level of patients [4]. Letting the patient speak, giving a patient hearing and making the patient participate in planning the plan of action or the treatment plan by explanation of diagnosis and treatment process plays an important role in driving the satisfaction of patients [4]. Courteous, approachable, smiling, soft spoken, empathetic Physicians with friendly behavior have shown to have better doctor patient relationship and better patient satisfaction levels [4].

The nurse

Studies show that nurses providing useful and adequate information to patients about each application and procedure and necessary explanations about illness, diagnosis and treatment drastically increased patient satisfaction levels [5]. The results also showed that nurses should provide care in a framework of respect, favor and courtesy towards patients by emphasizing the importance of communication [5].

Ambience

The patient is space sensitive and bad general condition of the building is perceived by him negatively⁶. A spacious, clean room with adequate lighting and ventilation, optimum temperature settings, without any noise or disturbing sounds with a certain amount of privacy helps improve patient satisfaction [6].

Dietary services

Good quality of food service is not only necessary for improvement of health of a patient but also an important aspect for improvement of patient satisfaction and public image of a hospital. Careful planning, proper layout, adequate equipment, efficient menu planning, proper cooking, motivated staff and adequate supportive supervision are essential components of a good dietary service which definitely has a role in offering patient satisfaction.

Housekeeping services

All the activities directed towards providing a clean, safe and comfortable environment to the patient, staff and visitors in the hospital come under the term housekeeping services. The patients admitted in the hospital do not get cured only by the medical, nursing care, drugs and surgical procedures. There is a combination of factors which contribute to the healing process. Palatable food, clean linen, a congenial atmosphere and good interpersonal relationships in a clean, safe and hygienic environment have been recognized to be essential in the recovery of the sick in the hospital.

Results

The reputation of any health care facility is the dominant factor in determining patient's preferences which in turn depends on their perceptions of the institution. The perceptions are based largely by personal experiences, word of mouth publicity and information shared by a close relative or someone from that organization. Results of exit surveys and patient feedback questionnaires reveal that about 70% of client's awareness about the hospital comes from personal experiences, word of mouth and experience of a close friend or relative and 30% of it comes from paid advertisements. If the patients feel ignored and uncared for during their hospitalization, patient satisfaction is at an extremely low level and this invites legal issues and consumer suites, hence patient satisfaction is of immense importance and every effort should be made to measure and improve patient satisfaction levels.

Conclusion

Evidence based medicine suggests that quality medical care should be provided to the patient which is effective and optimum health care. Today's patient is a consumer and is not much interested in how judicious you have been in ordering investigations, how meticulously you have performed the surgery or how skillfully you have used your clinical acumen in diagnosing and treating the patient. He is more interested in how he was made to feel in the health care facility by the health care workers during the process of health care delivery. Small little things like soft skills of the Physician, the mannerisms of the nurse, the behavior of the paramedical staff, the communication by the team of treating doctors about his disease outcome, the options of treatment available and the details about the procedure which he would be undergoing go a long way in improving patient satisfaction. A well ventilated, well lit room, noise free room with privacy and a clean, safe and secure environment, clean linen, healthy and tasty dietary services are some of the patient's expectations and unsaid demands which if met significantly improves the patient satisfaction.

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