



A Study of Patients' Satisfaction Measurement in Hospital Services of Selected Health Care Facilities

Madhusudan N.Pandya

INTRODUCTION

A change has continuously taken place in the Science and Technology (S&T) related to health care services. Such development is witnessed by success of science in curing various diseases and providing satisfaction to patients. But still there are instances, which really compel the health care providers to improve their quality of services. The satisfaction or dissatisfaction of patients depends upon the behavior of doctors, and the quality of services as being provided to them by medical staff, quality of services provided by administration and the factors related with house keeping of hospitals.

If we look at the history of mankind, we find that society has been suffering a lot due to some communicable diseases. With the development of S & T, large numbers of diseases are now under the control of medical science. Earlier, there were many kind of diseases regarded as incurable, Viz., T.B., Big-Chicken pox, Typhoid, Alsur, Malaria etc., has now become easily curable. But, such win over on such diseases have given rise to other new diseases too which poses new challenges to S&T.

In the 21st century, S & T is still struggling to find cure of few major diseases Viz., "HIV-Aids", "Cancer", etc. It is most likely to happen that in near future other such even few diseases may emerge and this process is likely to continue on and on. The important thing that takes place during such process is that the society gets certain benefits Viz., improved medicines; good treatment; and ultimately improved patients' satisfaction.

If one observes the business practices of various companies including health care service providers, it appears that few of them have begun to adopt concept of providing satisfaction to its customers through cultivation of the marketing culture. But there are still some questions remain pending whose answers involves doubts and uncertainty.

Whether the patients today are satisfied with the quality of medical and response behaviour of doctors?"

Whether the patients are satisfied with the quality of Paramedical services provided to them by Paramedical staff in various hospitals? Whether the patients are satisfied with the quality of the administrative services delivered to them by administrative and supporting staff in various hospitals?" Whether Personal, Psychological factors influences patients' overall reported satisfaction or not? If it is not easy to find answer of above-mentioned questions, there exist a need to develop a business strategy for satisfying patients by hospitals and other health care service providers. It calls for developing an effective business plan, programs, policies and practices by the hospitals and other health care providers.

Now, with the development of new technology, the patients are able to get medical services of varying specialists in specific field of medical treatment. The advancement and improvements in communication technologies have lead to increased awareness among the patients. It is therefore necessary to measure the reported resultant overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction of patients in various types of hospitals.



SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of study was restricted to selected hospital services as provided to patients by doctors, paramedical staff, and also administrative staff amongst selected hospitals such as Government hospitals (GHs); Trust hospitals (THs); as well as Private hospitals (PHs); located in the Baroda City of the State of Gujarat, India.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research study was undertaken mainly keeping in mind following major objectives.

- To measure patients' overall satisfaction /dissatisfaction as experienced and reported by selected patients on selected hospital services;
- To collect selected patients' opinion on selected criteria on hospital services, and
- To evaluate the actual experience of selected patients' on selected hospital services.



HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the selection of a given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No.07).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the various medical services provided to him/her by doctors' of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No.08-01 to 08-17).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the various services provided to him/her by paramedical staff of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No.08-18 to 08-33).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the various services provided to him/her by administrative staff of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No.08-34 to 08-46).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the environment (physical facilities) of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No.08-47 to 08-64).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the tangible facilities of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No. 08 -16, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, and 60).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria

used to measure selected patients' responses for the reliability of service provided in the given type hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No. 08 -04, 11, 12, 21, and 22).

- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the responsiveness of services providers of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No. 08 -02, 14, 19, 27, 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, and 41).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the assurance from the hospital services of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No.08 -01, 06, 07, 18, 23, 24, and 25).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the empathy experienced from the hospital services of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No. 08 -03, 05, 08, 09, 10, 15, 20, 36, 45, and 46).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the dignity maintained by the services providers of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No. 08 -13, 26, 29, 30, 31, 42, 43, and 44).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the accessibility / affordability of the hospital services of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No. 08 -17, 61, 62, 63, and 64).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the overall satisfaction with selected criteria of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No.09).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for the overall satisfaction with the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No.-10).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' post-purchase behaviour vis-a vis the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No.-11).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses medical services (best services) of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No.-12).
- The average opinion of selected patients' in the selected type of hospitals (GHs; THs; and PHs), on selected criteria used to measure selected patients' responses for medical service (worst services) of the given type of hospital (GHs; THs; and PHs), is equal (Q. No. 13).
- Mean of patients' view about selected type of hospital is equal in terms of decision regarding selection of hospital and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is

different from other.

- Mean of patients' view about selected type of hospitals is equal in terms of medical services and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.
- Mean of patients' view about selected type of hospitals is equal in terms of paramedical staff services and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.
- Mean of patients' response about selected type of hospital is equal in terms of Administrative services of hospital and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.
- Mean of patients' responses about selected type of hospital is equal in terms of Environment (Physical facilities) related criterion of the hospitals and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.
- Mean of patients' responses about selected type of hospitals is equal in terms of tangible facilities of hospitals and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.
- Mean of patients' responses about selected type of hospital is equal in terms of Reliability criterion of hospital and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.
- Mean of patients' responses about selected type of hospital is equal in terms of Responsiveness criterion of hospital and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.
- Mean of patients' responses about selected type of hospital is equal in terms of Assurance criterion of hospitals and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.
- Mean of patients' responses about selected type of hospital is equal in terms of Empathy criteria of hospitals and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.
- Mean of patients' responses about selected type of hospital is equal in terms of dignity criterion of hospitals and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.
- Mean of patients' responses about selected type of hospital is equal in terms of Accessibility/Affordability Criterion of hospital and an alternative hypothesis is at least one mean is different from other.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sources of Information & Data

The researcher has made possible efforts in order to collect available information from various secondary sources that have been outlined in brief as follows.

Secondary Data

The researcher has collected Secondary data mainly from various sources, such as, Business Newspapers; various magazines; Research Journals; few Published Reports, and also used Internet and few of the search engines to collect data and information on this study.

Primary Data

The Primary data were collected by the researcher, during September to December 2007, from the total number of 519 patients who were hospitalized and had availed hospital services from amongst selected Government Hospitals, Trust hospitals and Private Hospitals located in the city of Baroda in the State of Gujarat. (The list of the name of the hospitals from which patients' were selected is given in Appendix XXI). Out of total number of 519 responses 500 responses were finally considered for data analysis and interpretation. The Structured Non-Disguised Questionnaire was also thereafter translated in Gujarati language to help patients to better understand and to respond to it.

It consisted of total number of fifteen questions, apart from questions related to profile of respondents viz., personal aspects on patients' selected background variables viz., types of hospitals from where selected patients had availed hospital services; duration of hospitalization; type of medical treatment availed by selected patients; availability of supporting medical facilities nearby hospitals; issues related to selection of hospitals by the patients; overall opinion on selected statements on selected criteria of hospitals pertaining to actual experience as reported by selected patients; and suggestions to improve hospital services.

Sampling Decisions

In view of available time and other constraints being faced by the researcher, it was decided to conduct a sample survey, to measure selected patients' overall satisfaction / dissatisfaction based on evaluation of his/her own actual experience, using structured non-disguised questionnaire which was put to use based on a pilot study conducted in the city of Baroda.

A representative sampling unit was defined as a patient who was actually hospitalized, amongst any of the Government Hospital, Trust Hospital and Private Hospital, and had availed hospital services located in the Baroda. The non-probability sampling approach was put to use based on convenience sampling method supported with Personal interviews for drawing of sampling units.

The hospitals were selected based on sources such as, Directory of Medical College of Baroda as well as available information from Baroda Municipal Corporation and also through various other sources such as Yellow Pages of the Telephone Directory, and a Guide to Medical Services in Baroda City.



IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of this research study indicated that a high degree of variance in selected patients' satisfaction with regard to hospital services that were delivered to them in terms of different characteristics of services. These characteristics were related with quality of care and needs due recognition by all involved in the process of providing healthcare services.

The overall implications of this research study for GHs, THs, and PHs are given as follows.

Implications of Study for GHs

- The patients of GHs appeared to be more concerned with the accessibility and affordability of services which included three major criteria, namely, nearby location of hospital; economy, and easy availability of drugs. This provides an understanding to the GHs that nearby location, economy and easy availability of drugs are the criteria which have greater impact on attracting the patients in the hospitals. Hence, with due recognitions to these criteria, the GHs should be able to attract and maintain the regular flow of patients in the GHs.
- But, still variations in GHs patients' responses were observed and patients rated some characteristics of service delivery as poor, which needs improvement because GHs carries adverse implications on ability of GHs to provide satisfactory services to its patients.
- The first characteristic which needs improvement is related with dignity to be maintained by GHs while dealing with patients, which included two criteria, viz., patients should be treated by doctors with dignity by maintaining privacy and convincing patients before performing any kind of test on the patients. Less recognition to these two criteria have an adverse impact on impressions patients have developed in their minds about doctors of GHs. Hence, it gave an understanding that maintaining dignity with patients by ensuring privacy with patients and convincing patients before performing tests on them, would help in developing positive impression for GHs. Further, administrative staff of the GHs would be able to create positive impression in the minds of patients by giving personal attention and by welcoming them and through implementing their good suggestions.
- Other characteristics for which patients of GHs have reported unfavorably is accessibility / availability of doctors in emergency. The non-availability of doctors in emergency causes an adverse impact on level of satisfaction of patients. Hence, the due recognitions in making doctors' availability in emergency at the GHs would help it in improving the level of patients' satisfaction.
- Other characteristics for which patients' of GHs reported unfavorably was responsiveness criterion that affects the patients' positive word of mouth in favour of GHs. The selected criteria viz., the doctors' cooperation and making patients comfortable while asking questions; easy availability of nurses in emergency; prompt service by nursing and sanitation staff; no overcrowding and good grievance handling system reflects a proper responsiveness of hospital and would be able to create a positive word of mouth amongst the patients' GHs.
- For the tangible facilities, amongst the patients' of the GHs reported adversely in some of the criteria that had a direct impact on level of comfort felt by the patients. The good quality of food; parking arrangements, and regular availability of doctors should certainly increase the level of comfort of patients and would act as key inputs in improving the level of patients' satisfaction.
- The assurance on the experience of people performing tests on the patients causes an impact on trust and confidence of patients on hospital services, hence the due

recognition on training of people who perform such tests on patients would help in not only winning their trust and confidence, but would affect the patients' post-behaviour.

- The empathy as experienced by patients of the GHs appeared to be capable of improving the patients' satisfaction by showing good concern for patients' family members and visitors; by developing simple billing procedures, and by removing the complexity in the hospital procedure.
- The responses of patients for reliability criterion of the GHs have an impact not only on patients' future visits in the GHs but also on the patients' intention to recommend GHs to others in future. So, due recognition by doctors in diagnosing the patients' diseases, and in prescribing good drugs would help in strengthening reliability criterion for the GHs amongst the patients.

Implications of Study for THs

- The patients' of THs appeared to be more concerned with the references or recommendations made by their friends and relatives for availing hospital services from THs. So, this provides an understanding to the THs that by providing good overall services to patients, the hospital would be able to get more patients based on references provided by its satisfied patients.
- But, still variation in THs patients' responses was observed. Though, compared to GHs, the THs patients showed better responses for criteria viz., empathy, dignity, tangible facilities, accessibility and affordability, assurance and responsiveness of hospital services, but, still variation in trust hospital patients' responses were observed and patients' rated some characteristics of service delivery as poor which needed improvement as it causes an adverse impact on ability of THs to provide satisfactory hospital services to its patients.
- The patients' feedback on empathy criterion experienced by them in case of the THs calls for an improvement in the delivery of patients' satisfaction with regard to maintaining confidentiality, giving individual consideration to patients and putting efforts to meet patients' expectations.
- Due recognition in making doctors' availability in emergency would help the THs in improving patients' satisfaction.
- The research study provided an understanding, based on confirmatory evidence, that maintaining dignity with patients of trust hospitals, with regard to convincing the patients by doctors before applying tests on them; and also giving personal attention on them by welcoming and implementing patients' suggestions by administrative staff, would help in creating positive impression for THs.
- The responsiveness of paramedical service providers in terms of providing prompt services and remaining present in emergency can be helpful to THs in creating a positive word of mouth amongst the patients.
- For the tangible facilities in the trust hospitals, the patients reported unfavorably with regard to presence of flies and mosquitoes in the THs. So due care must be taken by the THs.

Implications of Study for PHs

- The patients of PHs appeared to be more concerned with the past performance of hospitals and doctors; reputation of hospital; kind of specific medical treatment facilities available in hospitals and sanitation of hospital. It means that providing better treatment to patients and taking care of house keeping can create a positive opinion in the minds of patients and would gradually improve reputation of hospitals, which in turn will help the hospitals in attracting and maintaining regular flow of patients in PHs.
- Though, the patients of PHS expressed better responses for assurance, responsiveness, empathy, reliability, dignity and tangible facilities of the hospital services, but, still variation in patients' responses were observed that calls for an improvement as it adversely affects ability of PHs in providing satisfactory hospital services to its patients.
- The accessibility of services with regard to reasonable charges of private hospitals can be helpful in improving level of satisfaction of the patients. Due care in providing hospital services would help the private hospitals in improving patients' satisfaction.
- Due care by doctors in showing impartial attitude to its patients would help in developing feeling of reliability about hospital services amongst the patients and it would further lead to recommendation of PHs by patients to others.
- The empathy experienced by patients from the service provider in the PHs appeared to be capable to improve the level of patients' satisfaction with regard to making patients felt comfortable during doctors' examinations; simple checking and billing procedures.
- The assurance on the experience of doctors and paramedical staff and their knowledge and efficiency in performing their duty has positive impact on trust and confidence of patients on hospital services of PHs. Hence, the due recognition by doctors and nurses in utilizing their

experience and in enhancing their knowledge and efficiency would be helpful not only in winning trust of patients but, it would also affect the patients' future intention in visiting hospital again for illness in future as the case may be.

- The responsiveness of paramedical staff in providing information to patients about side effects of treatment provided; and responsiveness of administrative staff in developing speedy, easy procedure for admission and discharge of patients from PHs, would help the PHs in creating the positive word of mouth in favour of PHs.



CONCLUSIONS

The earlier concept of hospital was giving importance to traditional custodian functions but today the hospital is recognized as a social institution as the today's customers considered to be critical and enthusiastic towards high standard quality of services. The only reason for existence of hospital is patient who needs services which should be reasonably and readily available at all the times, and such patients' needs should become a focal point in the rapidly changing dynamic environment. In such a situation, hospitals should strive for providing maximum satisfaction to patients and show patient-orientation in providing services as it shall provides confidence to them in facing the diseases. To become successful the hospitals', healthcare organizations, should monitor patients' perceptions about the hospital services to improve hospital's performance.

The hospital management should use identified areas of concern and plan its action plan in a right direction. There would not be any scope to improve the hospital services unless such bold steps of measuring patients' satisfaction are perused. Repeating study related with measuring patients' satisfaction will always be useful guide for managerial intervention in the hospitals.

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