

STUDY OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN HEALTH SERVICES

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Abstract

Customer satisfaction is the result of the correlation between a customer's assumption and a customer's feelings. By way of explanation, customer satisfaction is identified as the distinction between assumed quality of service and the customer's involvement or feelings after having perceived the service. In health services patient satisfaction is as important as other clinical health measures and is primary means of measuring the effectiveness of health care delivery. The current competitive environment has forced health care organizations to focus on patient's satisfaction as a way to gain and maintain market share.

Keywords: patient satisfaction, health service, service quality

Introduction

According to Pricewaterhouse Coopers, in the service sector, the health care industry, one of India's largest sectors in terms of revenue and employment, is growing rapidly. In India, the service quality of health care is miserable and in general, the health outcome is far from satisfactory (Bajpai and Goyal, 2004). Therefore, government of India has adopted a policy of health care reform having two basic objectives to achieve health securities for all and to provide quality health facilities for all within every district in India (John, 2010). In the health care sector, customer satisfaction is also an important issue as in other service sectors (Shabbir et.al. 2010). A health care organization can achieve patient satisfaction by providing quality services; keeping in view patients' expectation and continuous improvement in the health care service (Zineldin, 2006). The cost of providing health care is escalating at an alarming rate. With challenges ranging from rising malpractice costs to physician turnover, medical practices must maximize resources and make tough choices in order to remain profitable. It is precisely these challenges that make improving patient satisfaction so critical. Important ways to improve patient satisfaction are the reducing of malpractice costs, the decreasing patient defections, the decreasing negative word-of-mouth advertising and the increasing patient referrals. In addition, improving patient satisfaction leads to increased productivity. Physicians and staff often spend a lot of time reacting to complaints and dealing with noncompliant patients, which negatively impacts office efficiency. By contrast, satisfied patients are easier and more rewarding to care for, take up less physician and staff time and are more compliant. Improved patient satisfaction decreases the length of patients' visits and waits times, reduces treatment costs and increases patient volume. The issue of patient/customer satisfaction has gained increasing attention from executives across the healthcare industry. The measurement of patient satisfaction through patient satisfaction surveys has helped organizational leaders incorporate patient perspectives as a way to create a culture where service is deemed an important strategic goal for healthcare facilities. However, despite their many efforts and successes with satisfaction measurement, evidence shows that more work in this area is still needed. One of the primary challenges has been in sustaining patient/customer satisfaction improvement initiatives in the face of competing priorities and diminishing resources. Patient complaints have a long history of use in the health system as a measure of dissatisfaction, but it is only in recent decades that formal patient satisfaction surveys have been used as a measure of the quality of care.

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