

Patient Satisfaction with Services of the General Outpatient Department of a Tertiary Care Hospital in a Metropolitan City

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Abstract

Introduction: Patient satisfaction is at the center of the patient-centered care and is also one of the indicators of the quality of care. Assessment of satisfaction of the patients attending the general out patient department (GOPD) of the tertiary care center (government sector) in a metropolitan city helped us identify the potential areas for improving the health care services and their delivery, which was at the core of carrying out this research study.

Methods: After obtaining Ethics clearance from the Institutional Ethics Committee, this cross sectional study was conducted among 1377 patients attending the GOPD of the tertiary care centre for a period of a month. Data collection was done using a study questionnaire.

Results: Of the total study participants, 99% (n=1363) of the patients who visited the GOPD were satisfied with their doctor. We also found that 75.7% and 95.1% of patients respectively, were of the view that doctors didn't explain the side effects of medication and the reason for advising prescription. Ninety seven percent of the patients responded positively regarding revisiting the hospital; good medical care at an affordable cost was the main reason for their choice.

Conclusion: The patients were highly satisfied with their doctors and the services at the tertiary care centre. Depending on the results of the study, recommendations were made in order to be implemented for better delivery of services.

Keywords: Patient satisfaction, General Outpatient Department, Tertiary care hospital, Metropolitan City.

Introduction

Globally, fifty percent of the population is still unable to access essential health services¹. So, as a part of the recent Sustainable Development Goals, the World Health Organization has recommended that all United Nation members, achieve Universal Health coverage (UHC) status by 2030¹. India also aims to achieve UHC. Its focus is on providing a

level of quality that aids to improve the health of the service seeker². For low and middle income countries, Timely and equitable access of safe and effective evidence-based treatments is validated by quality, and without discrimination by socioeconomic and financial status².

Patient satisfaction is an important aspect for assessing the quality of patient care services³. Patient

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satisfaction depicts the felt need, surmise from the healthcare system, and worldliness of health care. Patient satisfaction is degree of match between expectations and perception of the care received by the patient. This multidimensional concept includes medical as well as non- medical aspects of healthcare⁴. Various theories of patient satisfaction in healthcare emphasize on patients reliance, utility and expectations to influence it. Healthcare quality theory highlights the importance of interpersonal process of care in patient satisfaction⁵.

Quality of health services was historically based on professional practice standards, however recently; patient's perception about healthcare has been agreed upon as an important indicator for measuring quality of health care⁶. Thus, patient satisfaction deserves all special mention because it is linked to acquiescence, and better comprehension and sustaining information provided by the healthcare service providers. This ensures desired health outcome. Outpatient department (OPD) is usually first place of encounter of patients in any hospital. It is believed that the care given at the OPD services indicates the quality of services of a hospital⁷. Patient satisfaction is thus a substitute but a very effective indicator to measure the success of doctors and hospitals. In the findings of the "Crossing the Quality Chasm" report, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) set forth 6 aims for a quality health care system for patient safety, depicted in figure 1. The latter three factors directly influence patient satisfaction.⁸

A patient is the consumer of the hospital who expects care and comfort while in distress. Patient forms certain expectations prior to visit⁹. Indifferent treatment of patients, unofficial perks for healthcare providers, lack of privacy of patient, and insufficient provision of medicines and supplies are common, yet are less acknowledged by traditional quality assessment methods¹⁰. Patients carry certain expectations before their visit and the resultant satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the outcome of their actual experience¹⁰⁻¹². Thus patient satisfaction study can be a learning in giving proportion to problem areas and a reference point for making management decisions. And therefore, patient satisfaction, needs to be assessed to aid in the improvement of healthcare services delivery¹³. The same was at the core of carrying out this research study.

Methods

- Study Design: Observational Cross Sectional study.
- Study Site: General OPD of a tertiary care hospital in Metropolitan city.
- Duration of Study: January, 2022 to February, 2022
- Sampling method: Universal Sampling- Complete enumeration of the patients attending the general OPD.
- Sample Size: We interviewed 1377 patients over a period of 1 month. We included all the participants fulfilling the following inclusion criteria using complete enumeration method.
- Inclusion criteria:
 - ⇒ Those who attended the general OPD during the study duration.
 - ⇒ Age > 18 years.
- Exclusion criteria:
 - ⇒ Those critically ill/those who needed immediate referral for specialty care.
 - ⇒ Those who could not comprehend English/Hindi/Marathi.
- Tool of assessment: Study questionnaire:
 - The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess determine the satisfaction of the OPD services.
 - Pre-formed pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire was used which was validated by the experts in the department.
 - Three native speakers fluent in English translated the questionnaire in Hindi and Marathi.
- Data collection: Data Collection was done after Ethical Clearance from the Institutional Ethical Committee.
- Procedure:
 - Step 1: After explaining the format of study to the participant, informed consent was taken from them.
 - Step 2: Collection of demographic details

and patient satisfaction using the study questionnaire.

- o The entire data collection took 10-15 minutes of time of the study participants.
- Statistical analysis:
 - o Questionnaire data was coded and entered into computer using Microsoft Excel.
 - o For descriptive data, frequencies and proportions were calculated.
 - o Categorical variables were measured as percentages.

Results

One thousand three hundred and seventy seven patients were included in the study. Most of the patients were employed and (n=1099; 79.81%) belonged to lower socioeconomic status, as per modified (2021) B.G.Prasad classification of socioeconomic status. Figure no. 2 gives the details of the time spent in the queue by the patient to get the OPD ticket. Most of the patients (n=950) had to wait for more than 30 minutes in the queue to obtain the OPD ticket.

Responses of patient’s towards general aspects of hospital and staff are shown in Table no. 1. Majority agreed that hospital was tidy 1294 (94%) and ventilated properly 1239 (90%). Out of the total 1377 patients, 121 (8.79%) used the parking facility. Only 23 (19%) of those who used the parking facility were satisfied with the services, rest were not. Out of the total 1377 patients, 511 (37.10%) used the cafeteria. Most of them 445 (88.07%) were satisfied with the services. A 5- point Likert Scale including: 1= strongly agree, up to 5= strongly disagree was used to analyze doctor-patient interaction (including respect, communication skills, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and addressing the patients’ queries). Figure no.3 gives the details of overall patients’ satisfaction with the doctor; 1335 (97%) patients would like to visit the hospital again.

Table 1: Responses of patient’s towards general

aspects of hospital and staff

The reception desk was--	Yes	No
easy to locate	1290	87
patient faced problem in obtaining OPD ticket	1267	110
2. Patient is satisfied with Signage system of the hospital	1296	81
The waiting area --		
Was comfortable	1299	78
Adequate sitting was available	1269	108
Drinking water was available	00	1377
Magazines/TV was/were available	00	1377
The staff in waiting area was respectful towards patients	1321	56
The staff in waiting area treated patients on fair ground	1333	44
The toilets in the OPD were clean	1342	35

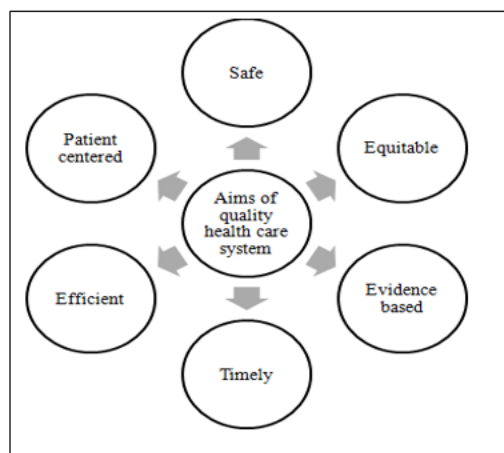


Figure 1: The six aims for a quality health care system for patient safety according to the ‘Crossing the Quality Chasm’ report, the Institute of Medicine (IOM).

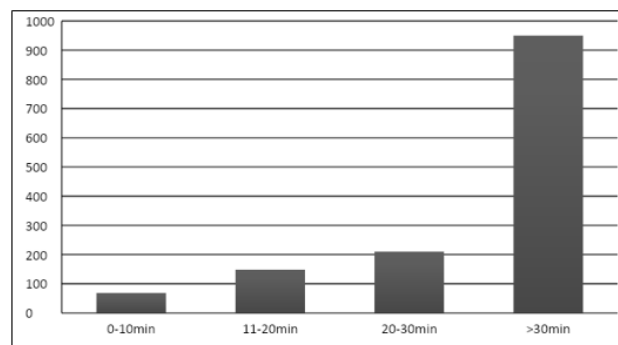


Figure 2: Details of the time spent in the queue by the patient to get the OPD ticket.

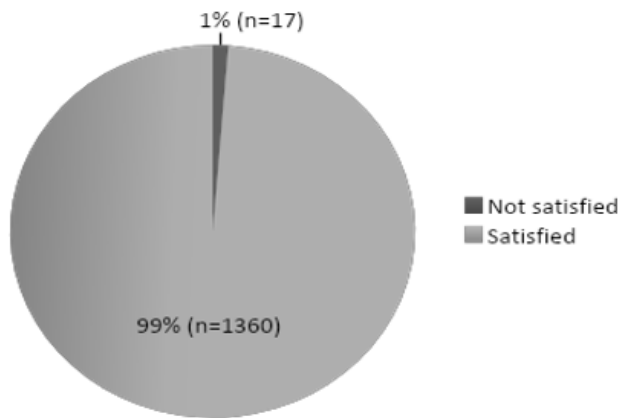


Figure 3: Details of overall patients' satisfaction with the doctor.

Discussion

This study assessed the patient satisfaction in among the patients attending a tertiary care (government) center. This study evaluated the satisfaction of patients with their doctor, which was 99%. Thus, greater compliance with follow up visits and prescribed medicine intake can be attributed to this fact. Contrasting were the results from various studies carried out¹⁴⁻¹⁶ with mere 52% patients happy with the services.

The doctors were found to be courteous (99.7%), gave a patient ear to them (99.05%), gave an opportunity to speak about their illness and concerns (98.9%), dose and time of medication specifications were provided (98.9%), follow up to the patients (97.2%) was advised and took care of patient's comfort during examination (99.7%). This is in line with other international studies which stated 88–92% patients were treated with due respect and dignity^{17&18}. Results of a study carried out in Karachi,¹⁷ consent was taken 58.6% patients before examination and 62.4% of the patients agreed that the doctor maintained privacy; whereas in our study, both consent was taken and privacy was maintained for all the patients. The quality communication with the patient has an effect on the health of the patient¹⁸.

We found that 75.7% and 95.1% patients respectively, were of the view that doctors didn't explain the side effects of medication and didn't explain the reason for advising prescription. Patients were asked about hospital cleanliness, adequate

ventilation, location of the registration desk and availability of seats and toilet facility in the waiting area. Majority of the patients were found satisfied with respect to these facilities. Drinking water facility was not available in the OPD. Also, magazines/TV was not there.

In a study conducted in Armenia¹⁹, patient satisfaction with waiting time, accessibility of services, and cleanliness of the facility was also high. Patient satisfaction with waiting time, accessibility of services, confidentiality and cleanliness of the facility was only 99%. According to the protocol followed in the hospital, patients have to obtain a slip from the reception desk before they proceed for their check-up by the doctor. Most of patients found the reception desk easy to locate. Though the time for getting the registration slip was more than 30 minutes for most of the patients, that wasn't seen to impact their satisfaction levels, which may be attributed to the behavior of the doctors and staff. Once in the waiting area the patient interacts with the attendant who is responsible for sending patients inside the doctor's room according to their slip numbers. Patients reported being treated fairly and respectfully by the staff in the waiting area. Such issues involving the attitude of hospital staff with patients can greatly influence the reputation of a hospital and is an important factor towards patient satisfaction. Similar results were obtained in the study conducted in Rawalpindi, Pakistan where according to 92.3% of patents, registration and documentation at the hospital reception was convenient and 96% were satisfied with reception staff attitude²⁰.

A large proportion of patients (97%) were found to be satisfied and willing to re-visit the hospital. Good medical care provided at an affordable price, was the reason given by most of the study participants to re-visit the hospital. This was found to be a very encouraging response and portrays a high satisfaction of the patients with the hospital.

Conclusions

- The patients were highly satisfied with their doctors.
- They found them courteous and attentive towards the patients

- The health facility was clean and adequately ventilated.
- Majority of the patients were ready to re-visit the hospital.

Recommendations

- The code of conduct of doctors and supporting staff is good enough as per the patients attending the OPD and the same should be maintained in future too.
- Drinking water should be provided at the OPD.
- Doctors should make efforts to explain the dosing pattern and schedule of medicines to be followed. Also, explanation for investigations should be given to the patients.
- Efforts should be made to get regular feedback from the patients.

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Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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