Chapter 10

Patient Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how there are three major stakeholders in a patient’s hospitalization: the patient, the healthcare providers, and the hospital. Satisfaction with the care and hospital experience is important to the patient because evidence suggests satisfied patients are more likely to adhere to self-care instructions and have better clinical outcomes. Hospitals have aimed to provide care and service that is highly satisfying to patients because it is the right thing to do and because reputation affects volume and revenues which in turn impacts the fiscal bottom line. Unfortunately, not all patients enjoy equal levels of satisfaction in the health care system. To succeed amongst today’s competition; healthcare organizations must be patient-centered and win the loyalty of their patients by providing an outstanding patient experience, then retaining these patients, increasing the number of patients through positive word of mouth and continually delivering greater value.

INTRODUCTION

The system of medicine has evolved over centuries. There are major developments that have taken place in the health systems in the last few years. You now have the establishment of corporate hospitals equipped with the latest facilities, the advent of third-party payers (insurance companies, governments, companies, etc.), increasing awareness among patients, freely available information through the internet, higher expectations in patient care, and the increasing litigations in the healthcare industry.

This has made the health care industry a very challenging service industry. What was once considered a noble profession is no longer thought as one. Patient satisfaction is an important component of evaluating care. Patient satisfaction describes how patients value and regard their care; it is a process as much as an attitude, so it must be, monitored continually, and frequently measured.
THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Patient as a Consumer

The last few years health systems have revamped the way of delivering care, patient have become the center of focus and new organizational models have been applied in order to provide patient-oriented services. Marketing experts are aware that consumers make their decision about utilization of services on the basis of their perception of the service rather than the reality and hence marketing and patient satisfaction have become of paramount importance as mouth-to-mouth publicity and personal referral is the most common and influential cause of using a particular health facility. Healthcare facility is very difficult to measure; hence, it is a challenge to a healthcare provider to influence a patient’s perception of quality of care. A patient’s satisfaction may not be totally influenced by the quality of physician available, but it reflects how the medical care has been delivered. To provide the highest level of satisfaction that is profitable to both the patient and the provider, management must control both the perception of expectation and the quality of delivery of the healthcare services. Knowledge of expectation and the factors affecting them, combined with knowledge of actual and perceived healthcare quality, provides the necessary information for designing and implementing programs to satisfy patients. With the advancement in technology and stiff competition, hospitals are always striving for improvement in their services. Patient expectations are constantly changing, so what satisfies a patient at one point in time may not satisfy him at some later date. As you improve your service levels on some patient satisfaction ‘attributes,’ you will change patient expectations on the remaining attributes.

Defining Patient Satisfaction

It is important to know what it is. Defining and understanding patient satisfaction will help to structure an evaluation process which will provide an organization with adequate measures of the variables that contribute to patient satisfaction. Most patients even if they are usually satisfied with the services, they may not be uniformly satisfied with all aspects of the care they receive. The management would need to be in a position to be constantly aware as to how much is enough to result in high patient satisfaction and to make them keep coming back. (Naidu, 2009).

Patient satisfaction is “a person’s positive feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting for comparing a product or services perceived performance or outcome in relation to his or her expectations” (Anand, Kaushal, & Gupta, 2012; Rashmi & Vijakumar, 2010).

A patient’s experience is based on numerous encounters with various situations. The experience can begin with the various touchpoints, that could even mean getting to your website, then by physically visiting the facility, the admissions process, meeting with the doctors, nurses, lab technicians and support staff. This could also cover physical aspects such as the location of the patient rooms along with the care and concern they receive while in their room, the discharge process. There are many factors that could impact the perception of the care provided during an inpatient stay. It can also include the cleanliness of the environment, appearance of the facility, the ease of access to specific locations, the waiting time, the clarity of the communication by the physicians, the outcome from the care provided, the cost of the visit, the quality of the food and the list can go on.