Chapter 3

Factors Influencing Patients’ Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

In complex systems, such as healthcare, patient satisfaction is identified as the patient experience of care and has been referred to as the “indispensable outcome.” The main goals of ED practitioners are the patient satisfaction along with maintaining optimal outcomes. Patient satisfaction has become a very important outcome measure when assessing healthcare systems performance. Nevertheless, it is a complex confusing concept. Some providers suggest several activities in order to enhance the satisfaction without being sure if these actions really improve satisfaction or no. Also, patient satisfaction enhancement activities should not conflict with cost efficacy. Several factors fall under patient satisfaction. Interviews with physicians prove that patients have specific expectations during a clinical encounter; being aware of these expectations, physicians can fulfill patient satisfaction. The goal of this chapter is to determine the contribution and effect of these factors in influencing patient satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Patient satisfaction started to be more highlighted and discussed in 1980’s. Between 1980 and 1996, the researches on this topic were highly increased. The approach of considering patient satisfaction as an important measure plays an effective role in making the healthcare providers accountable to their patients and thus is an important healthcare service provided by the hospital to its patients. Patient satisfaction can be referred to as a general point of view towards an experience of healthcare, may comprises emotional facet and relates to some desired expectations or social networks (Keegan et al.,
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1995). It is described by some authors as emergent and fluid (The development of the Royal College of Surgeons of England), or a passive form of establishing consumer’s views (McIvor and Carr-Hill, 1989). A good system must address patient satisfaction as the point of care for each patient’s medical care and service required before exiting the ED. Patient needs are related to the healthcare resources required to accomplish a service. To ensure patient satisfaction, each patient must be involved in the evaluation of his/her own experience during his/her visit to this facility. This will help in ensuring continuous quality and improvement. Nowadays, patient satisfaction has become a high index representing the status of a hospital/facility and a desirable outcome attracting decision makers.

The patient’s experience is classified under the satisfaction or dissatisfaction to a certain medical service. It is the patient’s judgment on the quality of care provided during a visit. Therefore, patient satisfaction should be considered an important factor in assessing the quality of care in hospitals (Torcson, 2005). Other authors acknowledged in their studies that patient’s reports of their health experience and their satisfaction with the quality of service are very important health measures (Bolus and Pitts, 1999). It is obvious that focusing on the quality of care provided in health services is a priority for any healthcare system. However, the high rising costs of treatments, equipment, etc., the shortage in medical resources and the variations in clinical practice have affected the notion of quality. Thus, a quality healthcare system is the one which guarantees a continuous quality of care despite all the shortages and limitations faced. The assessment of this quality is usually based on technical perspectives and the process in which the care is delivered. This assessment becomes more authentic if it is centered on patient’s views, experiences and perceptions. Thus, the system should assess these perceptions and monitor its quality based on these feedbacks in order to keep operating properly. Another goal of patient satisfaction research is to evaluate patient’s views and associate available values with different outcomes.

The human connection between patients and physicians has a huge impact. The annals of medicine throughout the years stated that some excellent care delivery failed to have a good patient satisfaction because of the unapproachable physician and some other poor care delivery outcome an excellent patient satisfaction because of the good relationship with the physician. Therefore, it can be said that the quality of medical care is highly influenced by the relationship between patients and physicians.

In the 80’s businesses approached customer satisfaction surveys in order to monitor services they provide. Nowadays, healthcare organizations started to adopt this concept where survey results are analyzed in order to evaluate the quality of the medical service provided. The sections below present the survey conducted in our studied ED in order to assess the main factors affecting patient satisfaction.

Quintana et al., 2006, discussed patient satisfaction and its relation to some areas in the hospital. They found that the lower the length of stay was, the higher the satisfaction rate was related to specific domains. Actually, the quality of care delivered to patients affects the overall satisfaction and indirectly the length of stay in the hospital. Majority of hospitals over the last years tend to reduce the length of stay in order to increase the rate of patient satisfaction (Borghans et al., 2012).

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study was conducted in March 2017, in a hospital located in Lebanon. The hospital has two emergency rooms in its emergency department. The two emergency rooms (ERs) were considered for the survey: the public emergency room (ER A) and the private emergency room (ER B). The patients were