The Satisfaction Snapshot is a monthly electronic bulletin freely available to all those involved or interested in improving the patient/client experience. Each month the Snapshot showcases issues and ideas which relate to improving patient satisfaction and customer service, improving workplace culture and improving the way we go about our work in the healthcare industry.

The Satisfaction Snapshot features:
- relevant articles from healthcare industry experts
- case study success stories
- tips and tools for quality improvement
- patient satisfaction and other industry research findings
- articles with ideas to help achieve success in your role

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Please direct any comments, suggestions or article submissions to:

Manager of Client Relations
snapshot@pressganey.com.au
www.pressganey.com.au
P: 07 5560 7400
F: 07 5560 7490

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Day Surgery Satisfaction Isn’t Built in a Day

By Cathi Kennedy, Corporate Communications Editor, Press Ganey Associates

Edited by Terry Grundy, Managing Director
Press Ganey Associates - Australia and New Zealand
Day Surgery is the fastest growing site of care in Australia and the most competitive arena in health care. Same-day surgeries now account for nearly 50% of all surgery visits, and the number of free-standing day surgery centres more than trebled from 1992 to 2009. It has thrived ever since Australia’s first freestanding day surgery unit (The Surgicentre) opened in Dandenong, Melbourne in 1985. There are currently 215 freestanding Day Surgery centres in Australia - (Australian Day Surgery Nursing Association) and all private hospitals now have day surgery units as a key component of their facilities.

It is predicted that within five years approximately 75% of operations / procedures will be carried out as day surgery – (Dr Lindsay Roberts, FRCS FRACS. Chairman, Australian Day Surgery Council).

In such a crowded marketplace, standing out as a provider of choice requires special efforts at customer service, staff need to be dedicated to giving each of their patients the best care from start to finish. Satisfied patients are more likely to continue to use a facility and refer it to friends and family if they receive first-rate service on the day of surgery as well as pre and post-operation.

Pre-Operation

Understanding that patients may have many questions leading up to the day of the procedure, successful facilities need to ensure that each same-day surgery patient receives a pre-surgery welcome letter that addresses many common patient concerns. On the day of surgery, pre-surgery nurses need to complete a thorough assessment and instruct patients on what to expect.

Many Press Ganey clients pre-register patients over the phone, minimising — or even eliminating — the time spent at the registration desk on the day of the procedure. Ensuring that patients have clear directions to the facility can also ease anxiety. Include a map of the location of the facility in patients’ pre-registration packets. Clearly marked walkways and directional signs at the facility are also very helpful. Open and continuous communication with patients is essential. Patients respond to friendly, helpful service. They crave conduct that is both professional and compassionate.

Top performing day surgeries provide updates on wait times and apologise when needed. They implement service recovery and script for consistency. These behaviours show that they put their patients first.

The Big Day

Two of the top five items on Press Ganey’s International Day Surgery Priority Index are: “Attractiveness of the surgery centre” and “Information provided about delays.” Both of these items are easily addressed and can make a big difference in patients’ perception of a facility. Patients should arrive to a pleasant, clean waiting area. Provide plenty of adequately spaced, comfortable seating for patients and their accompanying family or friends. Ensure that scheduling procedures are in place so that patients do not spend a long time waiting — long wait times can increase patient anxiety and decrease patient satisfaction.

The most successful day surgeries partner with their anaesthetists and surgeons to stagger admissions rather than have all turn up at 6.00 or 7.00 am in the morning — which then means some patients wait for hours before going into surgery.
If there is a situation that will cause a delay in the patient’s scheduled surgery, manage the patient’s expectations of how long the wait will be. Over-estimate the delay time if you are not sure how long it will be. Continue to update the patient throughout the delay. Personally escort same day patients to their destinations in the facility. This is appreciated by patients — especially those new to the facility.

Many facilities have a “no pointing” rule; it’s easy to implement and can make a very positive impact on patients.

Communication is key to patient satisfaction in the day surgery setting. Although patients should have already received information explaining their procedure, make sure that nurses and staff explain what they are doing, how long it will take and why they are doing it. Some patients are too anxious to be able to remember everything that they’ve been told or read about the procedure. It is very important to keep them informed at each step.

Even though the surgeon or anaesthetist has explained the procedure to patients during a prior practice visit, many same-day surgery centres also ask doctors to meet with the patient on the day of surgery to restate what is going to happen before, during and after surgery.

When communicating with the patient, everyone on staff should encourage questions from patients and anyone accompanying them to the procedure. Effective communication skills of doctors and staff are an important part of the patient’s perception of the experience and should be a part of the day surgery centre’s customer service program.

**Post-Operation**

Instructions the nurse gave you about caring for yourself at home is another key item on the Press Ganey Day Surgery Priority Index. Receiving a big stack of instructional documents to go through at home can be overwhelming to the patient. Although written instructions are necessary, talk to the patient before the procedure about what to expect post-op and ask for their understanding of those instructions, (don’t assume).

The discussion should include:

- Information about any necessary medical equipment, as well as how to change bandages and check for signs of infection, etc.
- An offer to call in any necessary prescriptions to the patient’s preferred pharmacy.
- Contact information for any questions that may arise, including an after hours number.
- Scheduling the patient’s follow-up visit with the doctor.
- Advising the patient what to do if there is pain, what to do if pain gets worse or lasts more than a given length of time.
- An overview of what the patient can expect to happen or how he/ she might feel after being discharged (physically and emotionally).
- Letting the patient know to expect a follow-up phone call. Ensure that procedures are in place so that all follow-up calls are made in a timely manner.
- Opportunities for the patient and caregivers to ask questions. Many facilities allow the patient’s family members to be with the patient during both pre- and post-op phase to comfort the patient and help the family feel more informed and active in the patient’s care.


**Make the Post Discharge Phone Call**

There is wide variance in Australian healthcare on the perceived need and benefit derived from conducting discharge phone calls. For example, in 2004 only 43% of Day Surgery patients (Press Ganey national database 2004 n=39,684) received a call. While many facilities see a clear risk management benefit, others see discharge calls as purely customer service follow-up and randomly select patients for the call.

The risk of post discharge adverse events is too great not to start looking at all patients receiving discharge calls as the conclusion to their clinical care. A study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine (Feb 2003) titled ‘Adverse Events After Discharge’ found nearly 1 in 5 patients had an adverse event after leaving hospital, with 66% being adverse drug events and 17% relating to a procedural outcome.

Worrying findings were revealed in a study conducted by the Mayo Clinic (Mayo Clinic Proceedings, August 2005), assessing the reasons for adverse drug events post discharge. The study found that only 28% of patients knew the names of their medications – only 37% knew the purpose of the medication and only 14% knew the possible side effects.

The conclusion is that discharge follow-up phone calls provide an opportunity to:

- Save lives
- Evaluate patient education;
- Identify trends that may require improvement in practice;
- Improve patient quality of care;
- Determine patients’ compliance with discharge instructions; and
- Assess overall impressions of the day surgery performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Adverse Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adverse Drug Event: 66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedure Related: 17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nosocomial Infection: 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall: 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: 8%</td>
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</table>

* 91 events occurred in 78 patients
The satisfaction outcome of the discharge call provides over a three point improvement in patient satisfaction mean score, (equivalent to a 40 position movement in a day surgery benchmark) (2006 - 2008 Press Ganey Study - 62 Australian Day Surgeries n = 27,665)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Overall Section</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
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<td>11,293</td>
<td>85.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admission</td>
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<td>10,796</td>
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<td>Personal Issues</td>
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<td>11,200</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>16,226</td>
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</table>

**Sample Discharge Call Framework**

**Show Empathy and Concern**

Mrs. Smith? Hello. This is <name>. You were discharged from theatre yesterday. I just wanted to call and see how you’re doing today...

**Assess Clinical Outcomes**

- Mrs. Smith, did you get all your medications filled? . . . Are you taking them?
- Do you have your follow-up appointment? . . .
- Is your pain better or worse than yesterday? . . .
- Mrs Smith, we want to make sure we do excellent clinical follow-up to ensure your best possible recovery. Do you understand your discharge instructions? . . .

**Harvest Reward and Recognition**

- Mrs. Smith, we like to recognise our employees. Who did an excellent job for you while you were in the day surgery?
- Can you tell me why Sue was excellent? . . .

**Check Service**

We want to make sure you were very satisfied with your care. How were we, Mrs. Smith? . . .

**Seek Process Improvement**

We’re always looking to get better. Do you have any suggestions for what we could do to be even better? . . .

**Show Appreciation**

We appreciate you taking the time this afternoon to speak with us about your follow up care. Is there anything else I can do for you?
Conclusion

“There was successful but the entire experience was very impersonal. It didn’t seem like anyone cared.”

That’s not a comment any day surgery centre executive wants to see on a patient survey. Remember that all touch points with the patient are important. Staff must give each patient excellent care and respect from the time the appointment is scheduled until the follow-up appointment is completed. Providing excellent customer service consistently is a challenge for any organisation. A few things organisations can do:

- Establish and educate staff on customer service standards and expectations (such as walking patients to their destination).
- Ensure all areas of the organisation are held accountable for adherence to the standards.
- Consistently monitor and report results and trends in order to correct areas with negative trends.

Employing staff members and doctors who are dedicated to service excellence makes all the difference. Become aligned partners with your surgeons, anaesthetists, pharmacy and hospital connections. Being engaged in the culture makes a huge difference in the way patients perceive their care experience. It also makes day-to-day interaction with co-workers the very best it can be.

Success comes from believing in the organisation’s vision; putting patients first; achieving results through ownership, accountability, teamwork, courtesy, honesty and respect; and striving to be better tomorrow. Complacency should not be an option.

Top performing day surgeries implement these strategies every day and they sustain patient loyalty, patient satisfaction, service excellence and quality of care — something every surgery centre can emulate.