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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Patients Want Caregivers Who Provide Information and Compassion

Satisfaction
The Root of All Satisfaction

Patients Want Caregivers Who Provide Information and Compassion

By Donald Malott, MBA, PhD, Research and Analytics Manager, and Louis Ayala, PhD, Researcher, Press Ganey Associates, Inc. Edited by Terry Grundy, Managing Director, Press Ganey Associates - Australia and New Zealand

“My first delivery experience was wonderful but unfortunately, this experience was overall opposite. Based on this experience of sarcastic, rude nurses, I would be VERY reluctant to recommend this hospital to someone for delivery which is a shame because I had nothing but wonderful things to say about (the hospital) for a year & a half.”

“I will recommend this hospital because the staff kept me well informed. They were very friendly & always helpful!”

For providers wanting to focus their improvement efforts, it is literally a million-dollar question. At Press Ganey, we used our international inpatient database — the largest privately held repository of data on patient satisfaction in the world — to identify the top 10 variables that determine a patient’s likelihood to recommend a hospital to family and friends.

Instead of 10 unique concerns, we found a general one: a caring and knowledgeable staff. This general concern was consistent regardless of the patient’s gender, age or cultural background.

Patients are most concerned with having a skilled nurse who provides information and assurance. They want their care providers to act like a team, communicating with one another to provide a seamless and cohesive experience of care.

We pulled the data for this analysis from the Press Ganey integrated survey, which combines the standard Press Ganey inpatient survey with the US Government mandated “Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems” (HCAHPS) survey. The Integrated Patient Satisfaction Survey consists of the HCAHPS questions plus Press Ganey’s standard questions.

The survey includes typical demographic information such as age, gender and race. Finally, the survey allows respondents to provide comments for qualitative analysis.

As of Dec. 31, 2008, the Press Ganey database included more than 3.1 million patient surveys collected from over 2,000 acute-care hospitals. Each participating hospital provides Press Ganey with contact information for recently discharged patients from which we randomly sample.

Every item on the survey (both Press Ganey and HCAHPS standard questions) was correlated with the item, “Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst hospital possible and 10 is the best hospital possible, what number would you use to rate this hospital during your stay?”

There were nine items that were universally in the top 10, all of them from the Press Ganey survey. These items represent an overall theme of communication and skill. The charts on the following pages illustrate the correlations which are all statistically significant (the closer to 1.0 the stronger the correlation):
Communication

Communication can be thought of as the patients’ level of belief that the staff included them as an equal participant in his/her recovery and that the staff cared about the patient as a person. There were eight survey questions that were universal to all demographics. “How well staff worked together to care for the patient” is the one communication item that concerns staff talking to staff. The other seven questions are about how the staff treat the patient.

It is important to remember each and every day and with each and every patient that patients are real people who are in a situation they probably did not choose. Because of this, they experience an entire spectrum of negative emotions: tired, confused, scared, nervous, sad. They are in an unfamiliar environment, surrounded by highly complicated machinery, listening to technical and medical jargon.

Patients have very basic needs. They want to feel as if they are the most important people on the staff’s mind. They want to be kept informed, talked to (not at) and to be active participants in their own treatment.

Skilled Nurses

As the front-line staff who have the most interaction with hospitalised patients, nurses are in a unique position to influence patients’ likelihood to recommend the hospital. This is borne out by our review of the survey data in several ways. For instance, five of the eight communication items mentioned above either directly reference nurses, or were included in the identified “Nurse” section of the survey.

This shows that respondents were considering these items to be in congruence with other overt nursing items. Furthermore, when it came to judging the skill of their care providers, only patients’ perception of the skill of nurse correlated high enough to be in the top 10 correlations with likelihood to recommend.

It is true that this question measures the patients’ subjective perception of the nurses’ skill, rather than the objective, or true skill. However, in our experience, this item measures patients’ perceptions of how effective nurses are in executing their duties and responsibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Patient Concerns by Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Cooperation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well staff worked together to care for you</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication with the Patient</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response concerns/complaints made during your stay</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of attention paid to your special or personal needs</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well the nurses kept you informed</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses’ attitude toward requests</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree to which hospital staff addressed your emotional needs</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff efforts to include you in decisions about your treatment</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness/courtesy of the nurses</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promptness in responding to the call button</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skilled Nurses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill of the nurses</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ratings are influenced by a variety of factors including judgments about the nurses’ adherence to safety procedures, professional appearance and the quality of their interaction with patients in the performance of their duties. Even if this perception is subjective, the strong correlation between this item and the likelihood to recommend shows that managing the patients’ perceptions of nurses’ skill is important to improving rating scores.

**Conclusion**

It is clear from the data and our analysis that all patients, regardless of demographic characteristics like gender, age and race, are alike in their needs. When we examine the likelihood of a patient to recommend a facility, we find a clear result:

- Patients want a caring and knowledgeable staff.
- They desire a skilled nurse who provides not just information but also assurance and comfort.
- They want members of their care team to act like a team.
- They want to see the cooperation and communication, and
- They want to know that all of this is because the staff truly care about the patient as a person.