

ASSESSING PATIENT SATISFACTION WITH MEDICAL SERVICES: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY IN A PRIVATE CLINIC IN CONSTANTA, ROMANIA

Mirela Boncota¹, Marius Dragos Prazaru¹²

¹ Faculty of Medicine, University "Ovidius" of Constanta", Constanta, Romania

² Emergency Clinical County Hospital "Sf Apostol Andrei" Constanta, Romania

Mirela Boncota

email: mirela.boncota@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Medical services refers to the range of health care services and treatments provided to individuals in order to promote, maintain or restore their physical and mental well-being.

Patient satisfaction refers to the degree to which patients are satisfied with their healthcare experiences. It is a subjective measure that reflects patients' opinions and perceptions of the health services they receive.

The purpose of the research is therefore to test the patient's satisfaction with medical services in the respective clinic, taking into account the essential aspects that emerged after consulting the specialized literature on patient satisfaction.

The research methodology provides for the use of a quantitative method, namely the questionnaire, which also represents personal contribution to the development of knowledge in the respective field. The questionnaire has 25 questions and is addressed to a number of 50 patients of a private clinic in Constanta, Romania,.

Keywords: Patient satisfaction, medical services

Introduction

The present paper entitled Patient satisfaction towards medical services represents a research study that includes theoretical and practical notions regarding medical services and the satisfaction felt by the patient in the context of their provision.

Patient satisfaction with medical services is the final barometer for measuring their quality, and by discovering weaknesses, essential aspects can be improved that can generate results and benefits both for the patient, on the one hand, and for the clinic, on the other (1).

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to test the patient's satisfaction with medical services in the respective clinic, taking into account the essential aspects that emerged after consulting the specialized literature on patient satisfaction.

The research methodology provides for the use of a quantitative method, namely the questionnaire, which also represents personal contribution to the development of knowledge in the respective field.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medical services refers to the range of health care services and treatments provided

to individuals in order to promote, maintain or restore their physical and mental well-being (2).

Medical services may be provided through public or private systems and may be financed by government programs, private insurance, or actually paid for by patients (3). The provision of medical services is governed by a series of regulations and standards designed to ensure the safety, effectiveness and quality of patient care.

In terms of the broad classification of medical services, they can be divided into primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary medical care services, depending on the level of complexity and severity of the health condition (3).

Primary care is the first point of contact between individuals and the health system and is usually provided by health professionals such as family doctors, general practitioners and pediatricians. Primary care providers are trained to provide a wide range of health care services, including preventive care, diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic diseases, and management of ongoing health conditions (4).

Secondary care refers to health care services that are usually provided by medical specialists and other health professionals who have specific expertise in treating a particular type of disease or condition (5).

Tertiary care refers to highly specialized medical care and advanced treatments that are usually provided in specialized hospitals or medical centers that have the resources and expertise to manage complex medical conditions and perform specialized procedures (6).

Medical services are important to patients for several reasons, among which the most essential of these are: diagnosis and treatment, prevention and screening, management of chronic conditions, support and guidance and emergency care

Medical services provide patients with the diagnosis and treatment they need to manage their health. Healthcare professionals, such as doctors and nurses, use their expertise and knowledge to determine the underlying cause of a patient's symptoms and provide the appropriate treatment plan (7).

The specific treatment plan will depend on the patient's diagnosis and medical history. The

healthcare provider will consider factors such as the patient's age, general health, medical history and any other relevant factors. The healthcare provider will also monitor the patient's response to treatment and make necessary adjustments to ensure optimal health outcomes. (5)

Health services provide many benefits to individuals, families and communities. Some of the advantages of medical services are: improved health, preventive care, access to healthcare, timely treatment, a better quality of life, education for health and economic benefits (8).

Despite the many advances in modern medicine, there are several limitations to medical services that can affect access to care, quality of care, and patient outcomes. Some of the limitations of medical services include: geographical barriers, linguistic and cultural barriers, medical errors, technological limitations and labor shortage

These limitations highlight the need for continued efforts to improve medical services and ensure that all individuals have access to high-quality, affordable care.

PATIENT SATISFACTION. THE PARAMETER FOR MEASURING QUALITY MEDICAL SERVICES

Patient satisfaction is a crucial component of healthcare provision and has become an essential parameter for measuring the quality of healthcare services.

Patient satisfaction refers to the degree to which patients are satisfied with their healthcare experiences (9). It is a subjective measure that reflects patients' opinions and perceptions of the health services they receive (9). Patient satisfaction is influenced by various factors, including quality of care, communication with healthcare providers, access to care, staff attitudes, environment, and cost of care (10).

Patients who are satisfied with their healthcare experiences are more likely to adhere to treatment plans, have better health outcomes and have a higher level of trust in their healthcare providers. On the other hand, patients who are dissatisfied with their healthcare experiences may be less likely to adhere to treatment plans, seek alternative healthcare options, and have lower levels of trust in their healthcare providers

(11).

Patient satisfaction is a vital component of healthcare and is of significant importance due to the following aspects: improving patient outcomes, increasing patient loyalty, increasing patient referrals, meeting quality standards of medical care and promoting patient-centered care (12).

Measuring patient satisfaction is essential for assessing the quality of healthcare and identifying areas for improvement. It can be challenging because it is a subjective measure that depends on individual experiences and perceptions (13). Various methods can be used to measure patient satisfaction: surveys, discussion groups, feedback forms and complains and compliments (14).

PATIENT SATISFACTION WITH MEDICAL SERVICES AT A PRIVATE MEDICAL UNIT

The specialized literature has provided us with a series of criteria according to which we can evaluate the patient's satisfaction with medical services and, implicitly, a series of ways that can be undertaken to improve the activities that present weaknesses from the

Patients' perspective. These criteria are represented by: Access to medical services; Cleanliness; Communication with staff; Staff attitude; Staff training; Information received; Cost of services; Promptness; Environment; The facilities; The results of the medical services received.

Taking into account all these criteria, we created a questionnaire with 25 questions and addressed it to a number of 50 patients of the private medical unit within Constanta county.

Of the 50 patients who participated in the questionnaire, 50%, representing a number of 25 people, were women and another 50% were men, located in different age ranges, who were included in the questionnaire.

With the help of the analysis we want to get the opinion and satisfaction of the respondents about all the aspects found in the criteria mentioned above and also to be able to formulate ways to improve the satisfaction of the patients, where it will be necessary.

Table 1 What age range do you fall into?

Question 1	N (%)
Under 18 years old	7 (14%)
19 – 29 years old	16 (32%)
30 – 39 years old	6 (12%)
40 – 49 years old	13 (26%)
Over 50 years old	8 (16%)

The results of the questionnaire cover respondents from all the selected age categories, most being in the 19-29 years category, respectively 16 people and in the 40-40 years category, respectively 13 people (table 1). According to these data, questionnaire responses have the ability to generalize patient satisfaction over all age ranges but also have the limitation of individualizing responses over a certain range.

Table 2 How long have you chosen to use the medical services provided by Private Medical Unit?

Question 2	N (%)
First time	11 (22%)
Under a year	9 (18%)
Over an year	16 (32%)
Over 5 years	11 (22%)
Over 10 years	3 (6%)

The patients who answered the questionnaire have been using the medical services provided by Private Medical Unit for some time (table 2). Most respondents, namely 16 people mentioned that they have been calling for services for over a year, 11 patients have been calling for over 5 years and all 11 said that it was for the first time. The answers in the questionnaire will largely cover the opinion of patients who have been using the clinic's services for a long time, as well as those who have called for the first time.

Table 3 Do you frequently use the medical services provided by Private Medical Unit?

Question 3	N (%)
When it's necessary	9 (18%)
Once a year	8 (16%)
Once every 6 months	12 (24%)
Regular	21 (42%)

Clinic patients frequently call on the

medical services offered by Private Medical Unit, most of them answering that they use them once every 6 months (12 people) and even more regularly than that (21 people) (table 3). These data will highlight the fact that the answers to the questions asked will come, more, from those who already have a frequency of calling on medical services within Private Medical Unit, so they have had time to form an opinion based on several visits.

Table 4 Before arriving at the clinic, were you able to easily identify information about the clinic, services offered and location?

Question 4	N (%)
Yes	31 (62%)
To some extent	17 (34%)
No	2 (4%)

Most of the respondents, namely 31 people out of the 50 surveyed, affirmed that it was easy for them to identify information about the clinic (table 4). But despite this, there was a considerable number of 17 people who mentioned that it was not so easy for them. From these responses we can see that access to information related to the clinic, including the services offered and the location, are easy to find but small improvements can be made.

Table 5 Before arriving at the clinic, were you able to easily get in touch with a person at the clinic to guide you?

Question 5	N (%)
Yes	38 (76%)
To some extent	12 (24%)
No	0 (0%)

Respondents greatly appreciated the fact that they could easily get in touch with a responsible person at the clinic and receive guidance (table 5). Only 12 people out of the 50 surveyed found the guidance to be somewhat helpful. These responses reveal that the staff responsible for patient guidance are performing their responsibilities well, but there is also room for small improvements.

Table 6 When you arrived at the clinic, did you have a

pleasant interaction with the reception staff?

Question 6	N (%)
Yes	37 (74%)
To some extent	9 (18%)
No	4 (8%)

The respondents' choices indicate that the reception staff tries to maintain a pleasant communication with the patients and offers kindness (table 6). Of the 50 people surveyed, 37 people rated yes, 9 people were intermediate and only 4 mentioned no. There are indeed some complaints that leave room for improvement, but the general opinion is favorable.

Table 7 After communicating with the clinic reception staff, were you offered what you were looking for in accordance with your expectations?

Question 7	N (%)
Yes	39 (78%)
Not really, but it was alright	11 (22%)
No	0 (0%)

The front desk staff excelled at providing patients with what they were looking for when they arrived at the clinic (table 7). Of the 50 patients surveyed, 39 patients mentioned that they got what they were looking for, 11 patients gave an intermediate answer, and there was also no patient who did not get what they were looking for.

Table 8 Did you have a pleasant communication with the medical staff at the clinic?

Question 8	N (%)
Yes, the staff is friendly	37 (74%)
Neither yes nor no	12 (24%)
No	1 (2%)

The communication was also pleasant beyond the reception of the clinic, respectively in the medical offices (table 8). Of the 50 patients surveyed, 37 appreciated this fact, 12 gave an intermediate answer and only one appreciated the opposite. At the level of communication in the doctor-patient relationship, there are small things to improve, but the situation in the clinic is still favorable.

Table 9 Answers to question number 9 related to the questionnaire

Question 9	N (%)
Yes	37 (74%)
Not really, but it was alright	10 (20%)
No	3 (6%)

Most of the respondents appreciated the fact that the medical staff listened to them and came to their aid with the best procedures and treatments (table 9). Of the 50 respondents, 37 gave a favorable answer, 10 were intermediate and only 3 rated it unfavorably. There is still room for improvement, but the situation is positively inclined.

Table 10 In your discussions with medical staff, were you treated with empathy/ compassion?

Question 10	N (%)
Yes	27 (54%)
Not really, but it was alright	18 (36%)
No	5 (10%)

In terms of empathy and compassion, i.e. the ability to put yourself in the shoes of the patient in front of you, although many respondents rated it favorably, 27 out of 50, a considerable number of 18 people gave an intermediate answer and 5 people said no (table 10). The results tilt the balance favorably, but there is still room for improvement in the empathy/compassion category.

Table 11 Do you think the medical staff in the clinic are properly qualified and trained?

Question 11	N (%)
Yes	47 (94%)
To some extent	3 (6%)
No	0 (0%)

Regarding the qualification and training of the staff, almost all patients surveyed responded favorably (table 11). This fact denotes that, beyond compassion and the ability to maintain pleasant communication, medical services are provided at a high level, leaving no room for interpretation, so that out of the 50 patients surveyed, 47 appreciated the quality of the staff and the rest of 3 had an intermediate answer.

Table 12 After your conditions, treatment, or prevention strategies have been explained to you, do you feel more empowered and involved in your care?

Question 12	N (%)
Yes	37 (74%)
No	13 (26%)

Out of the 50 respondents, the majority, namely 37 people, appreciated the fact that they felt empowered and involved in their care after the prevention strategies, treatment and conditions were explained to them, and only 13 stated the opposite (table 12). This fact is also related to communication skills and again, the answers are favorable and the aspects that need to be improved are minor.

Table 13 In collaboration with the staff, did you experience promptness and minimum waiting times?

Question 13	N (%)
Yes	34 (68%)
No	16 (32%)

The problem of waiting times is encountered in most clinics, especially in those with a large flow of patients, as is the case of Private Medical Unit. However, out of the 50 patients, 34 appreciated the fact that they received promptness, while 16 stated the opposite (table 13). The situation is favorable and denotes a strategic action in the case of the congestion situation, but, nevertheless, there are still small things to improve.

Table 14 Answers to question number 14 related to the questionnaire

Question 14	N (%)
The costs are high	11 (22%)
The costs keep the quality/price ratio	34 (68%)
The costs are low	5 (10%)

The majority, namely 34 people out of the 50 surveyed, appreciated the fact that the medical services offered in the clinic maintain the quality/price ratio (table 14). The rest of the respondents appreciated either that the prices are high, 11 people out of 50, or that they are low, 5 people out of 50. This fact indicates that patients notice the value of the medical services provided and

the efforts made to maintain a high level from all points of view.

Table 15 Were the costs of the medical services covered from your own funds or with the help of health insurance?

Question 15	N (%)
From their own funds	29 (58%)
With the help of health insurance	7 (14%)
Both from their own funds and with the help of insurance	14 (28%)

The sources of financing the medical services purchased by the surveyed patients are mostly attributed to their own funds and less to health insurance (table 15). However, a considerable number of 14 of the 50 people surveyed also paid from their own funds and with the help of insurance. This question is meant to check the one with the impression of price. The customer may have a different impression when he does not bear the full cost of the services.

Table 16 If you have collaborated with the clinic in the past, have you had favorable results in your collaborations?

Question 16	N (%)
I have never collaborated before	11 (22%)
I got results	37 (74%)
I had no results	2 (4%)

One of the most important aspects of the medical act is its result itself, and on this topic out of the 50 patients, 37 mentioned that they had results, while 11 stated that they no longer collaborated with the clinic and only 2 patients had no results (table 16). The attention, seriousness and effectiveness of the medical act shown can be clearly seen from the patients' answers.

Table 17 Did you feel like you were able to access medical services easily and in a timely manner?

Question 17	N (%)
Yes	39 (78%)
Not really, but it was alright	11 (22%)
No	0 (0%)

From the respondents' assessments, it appears favorably that the medical services offered by the clinic can be accessed easily and

in a timely manner because 39 patients out of the 50 surveyed appreciated this option and the other 11 who encountered difficulties still resolved the medical issues they had in mind (table 17). No patient stated that medical services could not be easily accessed within the clinic.

Table 18. From the time you entered the clinic to the time you left, did you feel like you were in a crowded environment?

Question 18	N (%)
Yes	17 (34%)
It was a bit crowded	23 (46%)
No	10 (20%)

The responding patients stated that it was crowded, 17 of the 50 strongly rated yes and 23 mentioned that it was only a little crowded (table 18). In reality, for a clinic to succeed in meeting all the criteria of patient satisfaction, a very efficient and effective management is necessary, because at the same time that the clinic is crowded, patients must also benefit from minimal waiting times and pleasant communication, compassion and medical services provided at a high level, which requires a well-structured strategy.

Table 19 Did you feel safe from the moment you entered the clinic until you left?

Question 19	N (%)
Yes	50 (100%)
Yes, with few exceptions	0 (0%)
No	0 (0%)

All the 50 patients responding to the questionnaire felt safe, a fact that indicates that there is no need to intervene in this department, but only maintain it at the level it is already at (table 19).

Table 20 From your perspective, does the clinic have all the necessary equipment, including technology, to provide high-level medical services?

Question 20	N (%)
Yes	35 (70%)
I don't know for certain	15 (30%)
No	0 (0%)

The majority of respondents, namely 35 of the 50 surveyed, affirmed the fact that the clinic

has the necessary equipment, the remaining 15 said they did not know for sure, but no respondent chose a firm no (table 20). These answers highlight the fact that considerable efforts have been made in the clinic as well in the endowments, as they emerge from the opinions of the patients participating in the questionnaire.

Table 21 What is your opinion about the level of cleanliness in the clinic's hallways?

Question 21	N (%)
It is quite clean	44 (88%)
It is acceptable	6 (12%)
I don't have a very good opinion	0 (0%)

Of the 50 patients who answered the questionnaire, 44 rated the clinic's hallways as clean and 6 mentioned acceptable cleanliness (table 21). The hallways are heavily trafficked and the fact that most patients reported cleanliness indicates increased attention to this aspect on the part of the clinic.

Table 22 What is your opinion about the level of cleanliness in the doctor's office?

Question 22	N (%)
It is quite clean	50 (100%)
It is acceptable	0 (0%)
I don't have a very good opinion	0 (0%)

All the patients participating in the questionnaire stated that the interior of the medical offices are quite clean. In the medical office, there is not as much traffic as in the clinic hallways, but nevertheless, the cleanliness stood out from the perspective of the patients (table 22).

Table 23 What is your opinion about the level of cleanliness in the sanitary facilities?

Question 23	N (%)
It is quite clean	37 (74%)
It is acceptable	9 (18%)
I don't have a very good opinion	0 (0%)
I did not enter	4 (8%)

Cleanliness also exists at the level of sanitary groups within the clinic, of the 50 patient respondents, 37 stated that they are quite clean,

9 mentioned the fact that it is acceptable and 4 people from the patients who completed the questionnaire did not enter the sanitary groups at all (table 23).

Table 24 What general impression do you have after your collaboration with the clinic?

Question 24	N (%)
Dissatisfied	2 (4%)
Satisfied	29 (58%)
Very satisfied	19 (38%)

Putting all the aspects together and formulating a single impression that encompasses them all, the patients showed their satisfaction with all the efforts made. In this context, out of the 50 patients surveyed, 29 are satisfied with their experience in the clinic, and 19 appreciated the fact that they are very satisfied, only 2 expressed their dissatisfaction, but, certainly, the situation leaves room for small improvements (table 24).

Table 25 Would you recommend the clinic to a friend or family member in need of medical care?

Question 25	N (%)
Yes	48 (96%)
No	2 (4%)

Out of the 50 respondents, the majority, namely 48 patients would recommend the clinic to family or friends and only 2 would not recommend it (table 25). Referral is one of the effects of patient satisfaction. Certainly, a patient satisfied with all aspects of a clinic will continue to recommend that clinic.

Discussions

The interpretation of the questionnaire results from the perspective of the 11 listed aspects:

Access to medical services :The participants in the questionnaire appreciated that the access to the medical services within the unit was achieved easily and in a timely manner, with small exceptions that leave room for improvement.

Cleanliness: It was appreciated by the vast majority of participants in the questionnaire, both in terms of the clinic's hallways, as well as

medical offices and sanitary groups.

Communication with staff: Both at the reception level and at the level of medical cabins, the communication was pleasant and centered on the patient. Most of the respondents appreciated a favorable communication, there are also small exceptions that leave little room for improvement.

Staff attitude: Respondents rated, to a large extent, that they were treated with empathy and compassion, that they were listened to and that they were given the most appropriate treatments and explanations. Certainly, this category does not include a totally favorable general opinion either, leaving room for improvement, but the balance is positively inclined.

Staff training: Almost all respondents appreciated the fact that the medical staff is qualified and trained. This category leaves little room for improvement, representing an asset of the clinic.

Information received: Respondents mentioned that they received the necessary information from the reception staff and medical staff within the clinic. Also, in terms of information about the clinic, before the patients arrived at the clinic, although most appreciated the fact that they found the necessary information, there were also people who found it more difficult to obtain information about the clinic, medical services, location. From this point of view, it would be helpful to improve the clinic's online presence by adding a structure within the clinic's platforms to facilitate easy access to the necessary information.

Cost of services: Most of the respondents appreciated that the medical services provided respected a quality/price ratio, given that many of them paid for them from their personal money, rather than from health insurance.

Promptness: This chapter needs some improvement, although many respondents rated the promptness and waiting times favorably, a good number of them also viewed the opposite.

Environment: Cleanliness prevails; all respondents felt safe; there are small problems related to crowd management inside.

The facilities: Most patients appreciated the fact that the medical unit has the necessary facilities, including technological ones, to provide high-level medical services.

The results of the medical services received: Almost all respondents who collaborated with the clinic in the past had results after using the medical services offered by it.

As a general opinion of the respondents, they declare themselves mostly satisfied, very satisfied in an average percentage and not satisfied at all in very low percentage. Almost all participants would also recommend the clinic to family and friends.

Conclusions

Medical services refer to the range of services and treatments related to medical assistance provided to individuals to promote, maintain or restore their physical and mental well-being;

Patient satisfaction refers to the degree to which patients are satisfied with their healthcare experiences. It is a subjective measure that reflects patients' opinions and perceptions of the health services they receive. For example, regarding the quality of accommodation, food, doctor-patient communication where women tend to have a lower level of satisfaction than men, according to some studies (15).

Following the application of the questionnaire, it emerged that the strengths of the clinic are found in cleanliness, safety, staff quality, access to care, quality/price ratio, equipment and communication.

Small improvements can be made to the level of information that clients can easily find before arriving at the clinic, which is information that refers to general data about the clinic, the medical services provided and the location of the clinic. Small improvements can also be made in terms of clinic crowd management and promptness and waiting times.

Most patients are satisfied with the services offered by the medical unit and mentioned that they would recommend the clinic to family and friends.

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