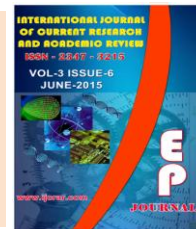




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Patient Satisfaction of Phlebotomy Services in a Tertiary Care Hospital

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A B S T R A C T

The healthcare service scenario in India is expected to evolve into a more developed stage. More emphasis needs to be given on patient satisfaction as this is an important consideration for the assessment of the hospital services. The concept of patient satisfaction is also rapidly changing and the hospitals are using variety of techniques to improve patient care and organizational efficiency. Patient satisfaction questionnaire is a validated instrument to assess the level of the satisfaction of adult patients. Objective: To conduct a patient satisfaction survey of the phlebotomy services in RMCH & RC Ghaziabad Material and Methods: A total of randomly selected 100 outpatients were interviewed by a 15 point predesigned questionnaire. Results: Overall it was found that 69% of the respondents found the phlebotomy services to be good and another 24% found them to be satisfactory, rest 7 % wanted improvement in the phlebotomy services. Conclusions: There is a scope for improvement in meeting patient's needs and preferences in rendering hospital phlebotomy services. The five areas which were identified for improvement were ability of the phlebotomist to put patient at ease; ability of the phlebotomist to answer questions; increasing toilet cleanliness and comfort; availability of all the tests requested by physician and Information about bruise. Patient feedback survey is an important tool which can be used by the management for improving patient care. Also, measuring patient satisfaction plays an increasingly important role in the growing push toward healthcare provider accountability.

Introduction

In today's intensely competitive health care environment, it is essential that healthcare organizations satisfy the expectations of their customers. From the perspective of the laboratory, phlebotomists are its most visible emissaries. Often, phlebotomists are the only personnel that patients encounter from the laboratory. As such, patients may perceive the level of care they receive during separate phases of the phlebotomy to reflect the quality of care provided by the

laboratory's clinic or hospital. Excessive delays, poor communication, bruising, discomfort, and other negative experiences may adversely influence patient's perception of care. Customer satisfaction will be improved if the patient's experience is optimal. Measuring patient satisfaction with our phlebotomy service can thus be an important quality improvement tool for the laboratory.

Patient satisfaction is the patient's perception of care received compared with the care expected. Evaluating to what extent patients are satisfied with health services is clinically relevant, as satisfied patients are more likely to comply with treatment, take an active role in their own care, continue using medical care services and stay within a health provider.

On the other hand clients who are not satisfied with a service may have worse outcomes than others because they miss more appointments, live against advice or fail to follow through on treatment plans. In clinical laboratory monitoring patients satisfaction is an important and useful tools required for quality improvement as well as to maintain their accreditation.

The study was designed to assess patient satisfaction with phlebotomy services in the collection centre of central lab of RMC Hospital and to relate this to key aspects of phlebotomy performance including patient waiting time, number of needle sticks required, bruising, discomfort, and patients' perception about whether they were treated in a courteous and professional manner. To conduct a patient satisfaction survey of the phlebotomy services in RMCH & RC Ghaziabad.

Materials and Methods

A cross sectional hospital based study was designed. A total of 100 outpatients were randomly selected and interviewed about Phlebotomy services with the help of standard questionnaire, a method which can be easily used to compare patient satisfaction with Phlebotomy services. Study period was extending over 15 days. A questionnaire was designed which involved response on the following fifteen points:

1. Waiting time to get blood drawing service
2. Privacy during blood drawing
3. Cleanliness of blood drawing area
4. Respect and courtesy of the staff
5. Ability of Person drawing blood to put client at ease
6. Comfort of chairs
7. Completeness of information on how and when to receive lab result
8. Ability of the person drawing blood to answer question
9. Toilet accessibility and availability
10. Toilet cleanness and comfort
11. Overall service satisfaction
12. Availability of place in blood drawing room to put things
13. Information provision about bruise
14. Availability of lab tests
15. Number of Needle stick attempts

Patients were asked to grade on the scale of 1 to 3 on all 15 parameters with 1 as very good, 2 as satisfactory and 3 as needs improvement.

Result and Discussion

Out of 100 patients who undertook the questionnaire 59 were males and 41 were females and they were in the age group of 15–59 years. Results of the survey are tabulated in table 1.

Overall it was found that 69% of the respondents found the phlebotomy services to be good and another 24% found them to be satisfactory, rest 7% wanted improvement in the phlebotomy services. The five areas which were identified for improvement were Ability of the phlebotomist to put patient at ease; Ability of the phlebotomist to answer questions; Increasing toilet cleanliness and comfort; Availability of all the tests requested by physician and Information about bruise.

Table.1 Parameters for phlebotomy service

S no	Parameter	Very Good	Satisfactory	Needs improvement
1	Waiting time to get blood drawing service (In terms of < 10 min, 10-30 min > 30 min)	68	31	1
2	Privacy during blood drawing	70	30	0
3	Cleanliness of blood drawing area	59	41	0
4	Respect and courtesy of the staff	36	62	2
5	Ability of Person drawing blood to put client at ease	28	30	42
6	Comfort of chairs	49	51	0
7	Completeness of information on how and when to receive lab result	76	24	
8	Ability of the person drawing blood to answer question	67	21	12
9	Toilet accessibility and availability	99	1	0
10	Toilet cleanness and comfort	50	43	7
11	Availability of place in blood drawing room to put things	65	35	0
12	Information provision about bruise	37	54	9
13	Availability of lab tests	68	19	13
14	Number of Needle stick attempts (1, 2 or more)	89 (single needle stick)	9 (2 needle stick)	1 (3 needle stick)
15	Overall service satisfaction	69	24	7

Only a few studies have attempted to evaluate patient satisfaction with the phlebotomy experience. Our study revealed that patients were quite satisfied with the phlebotomy experience in our collection centre of the central laboratory.

Results obtained showed that 69% of the respondents found the phlebotomy services to be good and another 24% found them to be satisfactory, rest 7 % wanted improvement in the phlebotomy services.

The overall degree of customers' satisfaction with the laboratory services was high. But there were some services such as the cleanliness of toilets, availability of tests ordered and soft skills of the phlebotomist

need attention. Therefore, the hospital administrations and the laboratory departments should work harder and closely to solve the identified problems. In addition, each hospital should monitor the quality of their laboratory services, use client feedbacks and assess customer satisfaction.

Patient satisfaction surveys are the best way to identify deficiencies and improve hospital services. Repeating studies at six monthly intervals is a useful managerial intervention aimed at delivering and maintaining quality healthcare. Measuring patient satisfaction plays an increasingly important role in the growing push toward healthcare provider accountability

Conclusion

From the patient satisfaction survey, we conclude that phlebotomist's attitude towards the patient was an important determinant of patient satisfaction. Out of the factors studied in this survey, courteous and professional treatment along with ability to put the patient at ease emerged to be highly related to patient satisfaction along with ability to handle the queries. This area needs to be worked at with regard to phlebotomy services. Also hospital cleanliness needs improving, especially toilets, which causes the most patient dissatisfaction. Rest of the parameters was considered satisfactory, so we need to keep them up to the mark or improve it further.

Recommendations

Based on our study some recommendations were given for implementation to the management and Laboratory staff:

1. Set the patient waiting time between 5-10 minutes. This is in agreement with patient expectation of the waiting time. Also this would equilibrate the hemodynamics of the patient while changing from standing to sitting position.
2. Make sure that everyone involved in the phlebotomy understands that it is of utmost importance to handle the patient in a courteous and professional manner.
3. Listen to all the patient queries and try to answer, if not possible refer to the appropriate person.
4. Do not tell the patient "It won't hurt", rather tell them it would pain a bit but reassure them that it would be over early.
5. Patient feedback should be taken at fixed intervals to improve the weak areas.
6. Cleanliness of the toilets to be maintained.

Apart from this adequate staffing to maintain collection standards, which give an extra edge of expertise. Also, Phlebotomists should have completed a standard academic course in phlebotomy and undergo thorough on-the-job training under supervision along with continuing education. Phlebotomists should participate in regular educational competency assessments, both written and observational, which give them an opportunity to recognize and overcome errors. All these steps when implemented lead to improved patient satisfaction.

Patient satisfaction surveys are the best way to identify deficiencies and improve hospital services. Repeating studies at six monthly intervals is a useful managerial intervention aimed at delivering and maintaining quality healthcare. Quality improvements in health institutes can lead to better utilization of health care.

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