

Taking patient feedback to the next level: Impact on health systems and health professionals

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Objective:

To determine the impact of patient feedback on health systems and healthcare professionals.

Methods:

CFEP-UK Surveys is a lead organisation in undertaking patient surveys for health systems/organisations (eg. general practices, dental surgeries, pharmacies, hospitals) and health professionals (doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists).

In the United Kingdom, it has analysed over two million surveys alone for general practice using the Improving Practice Questionnaire (IPQ) and the General Practice Assessment Questionnaire (GPAQ) as part of the Quality and Outcomes Framework. Both these tools are highly validated. In order to gain the higher quality points, general practices need to demonstrate evidence of how the feedback has impacted on their quality improvement activities. This information was gathered using a self-report format.

In addition, a randomised controlled trial was conducted to determine whether practices with patient groups scored higher on their patient ratings than those practices without a patient group.

More recently, CFEP is providing individual clinicians with patient feedback on their communication skills. Over 10,000 primary care professionals (eg GPs, nurses, physiotherapists), physicians and surgeons have received feedback from over 500,000 patients, and are using the results to help inform their appraisal and professional development activities. Again, evidence of how this feedback impacts on their consultation skills was gathered using a self-report format.

This work has taken on a more summary role for the General Medical Council who commissioned CFEP and the Peninsula Medical School to help validate the GMC patient and peer questionnaires for use in revalidation of UK doctors.

Results:

- GP practices are undertaking a range of activities to improve their services to patients. Many of these activities are centred around access to the surgery, such as appointment and telephone systems.
- Practices with patient groups were shown to improve their questionnaire scores more than those practices without a patient group. However, this impact was only significant for small to medium sized practices. Larger practices found it more difficult to bring about changes.
- Clinicians have found the feedback from patients on their interpersonal skills very challenging but informative. More support is needed to help clinicians improve their scores.
- The GMC questionnaires have sound validation properties, and seem to be useful for a range of doctor specialities.

Conclusions:

Systematic patient feedback is becoming the cultural norm for many UK organisations and healthcare professionals. There still remains the challenge of integrating this feedback into tangible quality improvements.