

261: Measuring to improve quality orientation toward patients: Facilities, indicators & patient satisfaction

Poletti P., Vian F., Mambelli P.

Objective:

To improve the quality of health services (including hospital units, laboratory, radiology, home care, specialist clinics, G.P.), and to benchmark health services and trusts using an integrated approach: Indicators of the facilities orientation towards patients and patient satisfaction in a bilingual (Italian & German) setting.

Methods:

The project was carried out in South Tyrol, an Italian province (460,000 inhabitants, 3 official languages). The local health system includes four trusts: each trust is managed by a general director supported by a board. Facilities include hospitals and community services. The project has been developed in Italian and German and includes:

1. Indicators assessing facilities orientation toward patients; Services survey;
2. A patient satisfaction survey.

Key steps:

- Indicators development according to the National list of indicators;
- Surveys of the services (1997,1998,1999); and later on every year using the main indicators;
- Feedback of results to the trusts, facilities, services, to identify areas to commence improvement projects;
- Provincial projects on: Patient charter and related indicators; Patient and volunteer association charters; Improvement projects survey, assessment and feedback;
- Patient satisfaction survey: Development of a survey model; Pre-experimentation of the model, based on literature reviews, and adapted to the local context (Health system mission and organisation, bilingualism). Many indicators used in the patient survey were symmetrical to the ones used to assess the facilities, in order to compare the different views of institutions and patients. Experimentation of the revised model on a sample of 3,000 patients (2002);
- Survey carried out in February 2003; and
- Results presentation and discussion with the trust, facilities, and services managers. Presentation to the general public.

Patient satisfaction survey main features:

1. Cross-sectional survey;
2. Stratified random sample by territorial areas (4) and health services (5 typologies), 3,100 patients
3. Satisfaction: ordinal rating scale, four levels (very satisfied, satisfied, little satisfied, not satisfied at all). "I did not use this service" was added as a possible answer;
4. Satisfaction factors: Macro (doctors care, nursing care, comfort, organization); Micro (i.e. doctors care: kindness, accuracy, privacy, information, competence); patients personal characteristics (E.g. sex, age, school attendance, residency, language)
5. Data collection: Anonymous self-completed questionnaire (50 questions); adapted to the 5 different services considered. Cronbach's alpha; Patient consent required;
6. Data analysis:
 - a) Ordinal scale transformed into a rating scale (interval scale, where P1 = 0; P2 = 33, P3 = 67; P4= 100;
 - b) Calculation of central tendency and variability (SD and SE) for all stratus and micro-variables;
 - c) Factor analysis;
 - d) Synthesis of results according to a defined weighted system;
 - e) Correlation analysis between satisfaction scores and patient personal characteristics, using Cohen's weighted kappa coefficient;
7. Representation of results: using tables at different levels of complexity, histograms, box-plots

Results:

Provincial average index of satisfaction is 82.3. Variation between territorial areas is 5.8 points and 12.3 between trusts (SD of individual rates is 15; Se is 0.27) Percentage of patients who answered " Little or not satisfied" to at least one question is 42% (SE 0.89). Variation between typology of the services was 39.5 points. Satisfaction rates: clinical laboratories (P= 77.4), Radiology (79.3), clinics (80.5), hospital units (84.0), home care (89.7). Satisfaction and personal characteristics of patients (age, school attendance, language and city of residence) were significantly related (0.01).

SE of the estimated satisfaction score P in a range 0-100 did not overcome 0.30 for inter-areas rating (trusts) and 0.60 for inter-areas (services).

Conclusion:

The project has achieved its objective. The results offered services input for improvements. Provincial benchmarking stimulated managers to review their visions and policies to improve quality and redesign services with a patient orientation.