

059: EVALUATION OF PATIENTS' SATISFACTION USING CRITICAL QUESTIONS, COMMENTS FROM THE PATIENTS AND DETAILED ORGANISATIONAL FEEDBACK

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Objective:

To identify quality problems in specific clinical subunits in hospitals as seen from the patients' point of view.

Methods:

During the period from 1999 to 2004, the County of Aarhus has systematically evaluated patients' satisfaction (inpatients, outpatients, one-day surgery and ambulatory care). 100,000 questionnaires have been sent out, and 60,000 answers from patients have been returned. More than 400 reports for specific subunits have been written. Each hospital and department is evaluated every second year. Each clinical unit has now been evaluated three times.

The patient satisfaction evaluation has been organised as follows:

- Questions are the same for every department, but different questionnaires are used for the different categories of patients: inpatients, outpatients, one day surgery and ambulatory care.
- A department can subdivide its results into subunits, and the population of patients can be separated into individual groups of diagnoses.
- Before evaluating a clinical unit, a meeting is always arranged with members of the unit and the people organising the evaluation in practice.
- The questions are selected as the most important and critical questions from the patients' point of view.
- The patients can comment on every question, and answers are presented in the report for every clinical unit.
- The clinical unit can benchmark its own results with the units they view as compatible.
- Every department receives its own report with results in figures, and comments from their own patients (to create ownership).

A system has been created which generates reports automatically and includes results, benchmarks, comments and analyses.

Results:

Analysis of the results of the study shows that evaluating patients' satisfaction has an ability to differentiate between departments on several levels. Significant differences are shown between hospitals, departments and subunit levels.

Repeating the study within a period of two years, demonstrates significantly better answers on selected questions all over the county, and significantly better result for departments which received a bad score in the first round.

Collecting comments provides useful information to departments. 72 % of the patients have given at least one comment. A single department often receives 50-100 pages of comments.

Conclusions:

The study has shown that patient surveys can be advantageous when performed with respect to very detailed organisational levels. Few, standardised questions are sufficient when patients can provide comment on every question. Repeating the evaluation produces positive results in patients' satisfaction. Collecting comments from the patients helps the department learn from the results of the surveys. When asked directly, 85 % of the departments expressed a positive view of the concept for evaluating patient satisfaction.