

Patient Satisfaction Surveys in Public Hospitals in India

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Objectives: To measure the level of satisfaction of the patients as an outcome of care in public hospitals, to identify the areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in public hospitals in Andhra Pradesh, India.

Methods: Cross-sectional studies, a total of 1179 respondents (including 244 attendants) from 25 hospitals in June 1999 (Patient Satisfaction Survey (PSS-1), 1466 respondents (including 430 attendants) from 32 hospitals in June 2000 (PSS-2), 1079 respondents (including 250 attendants) from 25 hospitals in December 2000 (PSS-3) were interviewed from the District and Area Hospitals managed by Andhra Pradesh Vaidya Vidhana Parishad (APVVP) in Andhra Pradesh. Around 40-50 inpatients per hospital were selected by stratified random sampling. Stratification was on the basis of wards and gender. A modified version of PSQIII (Hays, Davies and Ware J: 1987) reproduced in Wilkin & others (1992) was used for all the three surveys.

Results: On the whole the Global satisfaction scores for all the three surveys were low (70.3% for PSS-1, 70.6% for PSS-2 and 68.1% for PSS-3) in public hospitals in Andhra Pradesh. Further there is not much change in the satisfaction levels from PSS-1 to PSS-2 but there is a downward trend in the satisfaction levels from PSS-2 to PSS-3. Specific to the subscales the most significant areas of dissatisfaction were financial aspects and interpersonal aspects of care. Content analysis to the open ended question revealed that Corruption appears to be very highly prevalent and was the top cause of dissatisfaction, other areas of concern were availability or supply of drugs, poor utilities like water supply, lights and fans etc., and poor maintenance of toilets and lack of cleanliness in the hospital. There were no major differences seen in satisfaction scores by age, gender, education, occupation or by socioeconomic status.

Conclusions: Hospital managers and staff need to be encouraged in using Patient Satisfaction Survey (PSS) results in improving the quality of services in the hospitals (inculcate quality culture among the staff) rather than using it as an audit tool in evaluating the performance of the staff or hospitals. Need strategies promptly to stop bribery & corruption in Public hospitals. Other areas of hospital services which are of concern at the individual hospital level need policies for improvement. Proper dissemination of information to the public about financial aspects is also a prime area of concern e.g information about the introduction of user fee, payment system, and waivers etc., in public hospitals would avoid confusion among the clients about fee and bribery /corruption. Training the health personnel in Interpersonal Skills & Communication is another area needs attention. Public Hospitals need more Patient Satisfaction Surveys at regular intervals, as the PSS subjective data supported with other objective data like hospital indicators would further help in improving quality of services in Public hospitals. PSSs could be used as a tool by public hospitals, for accountability to the public, in marketing public hospitals and which in turn would help hospitals to be financially sustainable in the long run.

Key words: Patient Satisfaction Survey, Public hospitals, Quality